



"You don't like criticism much, do you?" an unfriendly priest asked the other day. My answer was that I don't get much criticism—not, at any rate, in the Church. At a place like the National Opinion Research Center, where I do my research, we desperately solicit criticism from our professional colleagues, for it is only by intelligent discussion of ideas, methods, and facts that we are capable of learning from our mistakes and growing. Criticism is an indispensable tool to any scholar professional. Criticism you don't get in the Church.

I suspect that most priests and religious and the Catholic laity who bother to read the National Catholic Reporter don't even know what criticism is. What passes for "criticism" in the Church is usually character assassination, questioning of motives, patronizing envy, or ideological loyalty tests. Serious, rational discussion of ideas, facts, evidence, methods, is something that is unusual indeed in the American Catholic Church. Read the editorial columns and the book reviews of our three supposedly intelligent journals, Commonweal, America and the National Catholic Reporter. They are, for the most part, innocent of concern for facts, ideas, or evidence. It is almost as though those who write for these journals are incapable not only of intelligent discussion but of acknowledging such a thing as intelligent discussion exists.

Why have envy, character assassination, questioning motives substituted for criticism in the Church? I think there are a couple of reasons. First of all, there

## Anglican-Catholic

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structure of authority for all time. We both agree, moreover, that the structure of authority cannot be static, that its renewal involves and always has involved a forward development and that in every age the Church must conceive its structure of authority not as a self-serving end but rather as a means of proclaiming that Gospel and serving the Church's mission.

The ARC believes that "a certain degree of convergence may be developing" between the two churches about the ministry of the Pope as a ministry of service to all Christian churches, according to the 16-page report.

On questions of morality, the ARC report said that while Episcopalians and Catholics "agree on the primacy given to the corporate witness of the Christian life-style," the question of how the individual Christian implements the Christian life-style "has been and is a source of apparent discrepancies" between the two churches.

was nothing in the training of priests and nuns — who still tend to dominate such journals—either in the past or in the present which taught them how to think in disciplined, and nuanced modes. They are undisciplined, emotional romantics because they don't know how to be anything else. They question others' motives, distort their positions, patronize them because they have never learned that such behavior is an inadequate substitute for thought.

Equally important is the lamentable fact that there are very few rewards available within the clerical religious world. There are not enough goodies to go around; so those who get them become fair game for envious green eyes.

The most recent horrendous example is the persecution of David Tracy. When Father Tracy's "Blessed Rage For Order" became something of a bestseller (much to everyone's surprise), Tracy himself became something of a celebrity—despite all his own inclinations toward the opposite. The curs began snapping at his heels. The charges made against Tracy are ludicrous, especially the guilt by association charge that since his one-time colleague Schubert Ogden does not believe in life after death, Tracy must not believe in life after death either. There is something of a McCarthyite witchhunt, and Tracy is the principle object. Under the aegis of the signers of the so-called "Hartford statement", a theological power play was cooked up by non-theologians Peter Berger and Richard John Neuhaus. Aided and abetted by the

## Six Installed As Readers

Six seminarians at St. Bernard's were installed in the Ministry of Reader on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Dec. 8. Bishop Dennis W. Hickey presided at the ceremonies and celebrated Mass.

The seminarians are Dennis M. Bonsignore of Holy Apostles Parish; Daniel J. Condon, St. Patrick's, Victor; George P. Heyman,

editors of Theological Studies, Berger wrote a long and incredibly shoddy account of "Blessed Rage for Order" which signals a general assault on Father Tracy's integrity and orthodoxy.

Imagine for a moment if you were a young Catholic scholar or artist with impeccable credentials tempted to write for the Catholic market. Then read through the National Catholic Reporter, Commonweal, America. Would you subject your ideas to that kind of treatment?

After a while, even the most thick-skinned grows weary. You find that your colleagues and friends are hassled, your family is persecuted, you are practically thrown out of your own diocese or your own religious community. If I knew what I was going to get into when I started out to be a "Catholic writer," I would never have begun. The effort is mostly a waste of time, and your friends and family have to pay a high price. I've done substantially more than half a hundred books for the Catholic market and figure I've more than paid my dues. I would kill this column, too, except for the satisfaction of annoying lots of people who really ought to be annoyed.

That's a bitter attitude, you say? Sure, it's bitter, but the reaction of the American Catholic Church to those who dare to step outside the rigid lines that have been laid down by ecclesiastical power or ideological elites is bound to make anyone bitter. I figure if I had any sense at all, I would have become bitter long ago.

## MISSION GUILD

The Catholic Mission Guild will meet at 1 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 11, in the Knights of Columbus rooms, Thurston Road at Brooks Avenue.

perplexing questions" regarding the role of women in Church life and ministry. "A careful study of the role of Mary, of other female saints, of sexual imagery for God, the Church and its ministries, and the soul, may provide important theological and spiritual guidance for our churches" on such issues as "human wholeness," and "how men and women image God in their being and their callings in the Church and the world."

In view of the "apparent discrepancies" between the churches over the formation of conscience in Christian community, the report recommended an "investigation of the relation between normative tradition and individual conscience in our respective churches." The report mentioned such current issues as abortion, right to life, the pastoral approach to mixed marriages and homosexuality.

The report also recommended a study of the "degree of unity" that each church feels is necessary to effect "sacramental sharing," and how each church "intends to relate this convergence between



25 Years a Sister

Photo by Mary Ann Ginnerty

Sister Loyola (Virginia Schmitz), SSJ, who has served as a missionary in Brazil, celebrated her 25th anniversary as a sister at a special Mass in St. Alphonsus Church in Auburn. Bishop Joseph L. Hogan was principal concelebrant. Sister Loyola is at left with her mother Mrs. Henry Schmitz and Bishop Hogan.

## Pope's Message

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a process from which — thanks to participation by all those responsible and through their good will and wisdom — there may at last take shape solutions corresponding to the criteria of justice, equity, and political farsightedness, as well as to those of human sensitivity."

On social problems, the Pope said:

"Dark shadows are thickening about mankind's destiny; blind violence; the threat to human life even in the mother's womb; merciless terrorism that multiplies hatred and destruction in its Utopian plan for a rebirth that will arise from the ashes of global destruction; the increase in crime; discrimination and injustices on an international scale; deprivation of religious liberty; the ideology of hatred; and the

unbridled justification of the worst instincts through the pornography of the mass media, which masks with pseudo-cultural intent a degrading thirst for money and a shameless exploitation of the human person, with the threats and enticements constantly directed at children and the young, undermining and drying up their fresh creative energies of mind and heart. All this shows how the esteem for moral values has been so frighteningly lowered through the efforts of a hidden and organized action of vice and hatred."

"We cannot be silent in the face of this reality — a reality which is unfortunately the heritage of peoples with the highest economic development.

"We appeal to all people of good will, repeating here what we put in our recent message for the approaching 1978 Day of Peace. Above all, we call upon the bishops, the priests, and Christian men and women to stem through opportune undertakings the forces that disrupt the moral order, to isolate the violent, to banish the exploiters and to oppose with civil and dignified resistance everything that is contrary to the innate dignity of the human being who has been created in the image of God and redeemed by the blood of Christ. A timid lack of consistency can lead to tragic consequences. Let us reflect on this while there is still time."

On human rights, the Pope said:

"If we had time, we would

like to stop and reflect on a theme of relevance and importance which, we might say, is ever more attracting the attention of the entire world. It is the question of respect for human rights — that respect for which individuals and peoples of every continent feel ever more the need, while experiencing still more deeply than in the past a resentment over the offences inflicted in this regard and unfortunately still encountered in many places.

"The expression of our solidarity in suffering and of our hope goes in particular to all who experience oppression and unjust restrictions in the exercise of that which is basic among human rights: the right of the religious conscience and of the public profession of faith, according to one's own convictions and traditions. This right has been fundamentally recognized and proclaimed many times and by all, at least verbally. It would be sufficient to recall the declarations and the pacts of the United Nations and, for Europe, the more recent commitments of the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference. But still, so often and in so many ways, this right has been trampled on, sometimes in a radical way, as still happens in our day, to cite only one example that is closer to us, in the small but ever most dear republic of Albania.

"We would like to repeat to all who suffer in this way that our ear is not deaf nor is our heart — need we say it? — insensitive to the complaint and to the requests that rise up from those people."

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