



Photo by Terrance J. Brennan

### Clothing Depot

Mrs. Grace Doyle displays some of the articles of clothing available at the Clothing Depot of Holy Apostles Church to Mrs. Lucille Moore, a volunteer helper. The depot is open from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. each Saturday in the school. Volunteer helpers and donations of clothing are welcomed by the facility, sponsored by the parish Human Development Committee.

### The Church 1978



Fr. Andrew Greeley

"All right, wise guy, what would you do if you were a bishop?"

Such is the response I get from a lot of people to my recent columns on the continued decline of the American Catholic Church. Unfortunately, the question itself is symptomatic of the reasons for the decline; for it betrays the intellectual immaturity of many American Catholics, particularly the clergy. An analysis is not invalidated by the inability of the analyst to provide a solution to the problem he has described. There are many problems for which there are no "answers"—not, at least, one to be described in a few sentences. Maybe the leadership of the Catholic Church should do nothing at all until it understands the nature and cause of its problems.

Anyhow, the answer I usually give to the question of what I would do if I were a bishop is to say that I would resign.

The outlines of the only appropriate response to the current American Catholic crisis are pretty clear: the Church should get back into the religion business and get out of the morality business as much as it can.

Religion is the answer to the fundamental questions about the meaning of life; it is that set of beliefs and motivations which sustain men and women through their life crises. It is that "story" which gives meaning and sense to our own individual stories, the response to those basic and fundamental questions, "Who am I? Where have I come from? Why am I here? What purpose, if any, is there in my life?"

Morality, on the other hand, is a set of principles for living the good life. Morality is related to religion and flows from religion; it is not a substitute for religion; Jesus came not to preach a moral code but to talk about the meaning of human life. In fact, he and St. Paul both rejected vigorously the teachings of those who wished to reduce religion to an ethical code. Not all of those who came after them have avoided succumbing to the same temptation.

It is a measure of the problem of contemporary Catholicism that most of its rank and file and many of its leaders have not grasped the distinction between religion and morality. They equate the Catholic heritage with a rather limited number of stern moral prohibitions. Catholicism is

a list of things thou shalt not do—mostly concerned with sex—and very little else.

More sensitive church leaders do not seem to be aware of the extent to which for many of their followers Catholicism is a mixture of nostalgic memories of their childhood parishes, bad Sunday sermons, and a negative sexual morality (with the moral principles usually enunciated by people who show no signs of knowing what they are talking about).

To make matters worse, the Church's moral code—equated with religion—is perceived as a set of prohibitions for which no good explanation can be given. In effect, the laity perceive themselves as having been told, "You do this because we say you have to do it, and because if you don't you'll go to hell. Don't expect us to give good explanations."

The encyclical letter "Humanae Vitae" is a classic example of this approach to morality. Instead of answering the arguments for a change in the birth control practice which had been assembled by his advisory commission, the pope dismissed them, falling back on heavy-handed authority. This teaching is the teaching of Christ because I say it is the teaching of Christ.

To regain its credibility the Church must return to religion not by abandoning its responsibility to teach on such things as sex and racial justice but integrating that teaching into a broader perspective of meaning, purpose, value.

Unfortunately, Catholic intellectuals and scholars are as uninterested in these opportunities as are their leaders. At a meeting of sociologists and theologians last summer the life-cycle opportunity was casually dismissed by one heavyweight thinker with the comment, "In the Third World the crisis of the middle years is whether you will starve to death or not." Factually he's wrong, of course, and intellectually he no more understands life-cycle opportunity than does the Church's present leadership. If he were elected bishop, we'd be in even worse shape.

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### WORD FOR SUNDAY



Fr. Albert Shamon

Sunday's Readings: (R) Mt. 4:1-11, (RI) Gn. 2:7-9, 3:1-7; (R2) Rom. 5:12-19.

The first Sunday of Lent always starts with the temptations of Christ. This incident is intriguing. Why was Jesus tempted? What meaning was meant to be conveyed? The answers are many and varied.

Matthew's gospel is basically a Church book. Some think that the elaboration of the temptations by Matthew has an ecclesiastical purpose: to warn the Church of the spiritual dangers that threaten her mission. One is the temptation to trust in miraculous solutions in lieu of the hard work of evangelization. Another temptation is to trust in miracles as signs of God's presence in the Church instead of the more difficult witness of Christian living. Still another is to trust in secular solutions, in secular power, the kingdoms of this world, instead of in God.

Others interpret the temptations of Christ as emphasizing the theme of true discipleship, so predominant in the Sermon on the Mount. The temptations present Jesus as the perfect disciple: He does the will of His Father perfectly. Matthew verbalizes this in Jesus' first reply to the devil: "Man lives on every utterance that comes from the mouth of God." In Luke's version "every utterance" is not mentioned. The perfect disciple fulfills every utterance of the Father.

A third interpretation by Barnabas Ahern sees Jesus as really tempted. After all, Jesus was God. Easily, He could have done all the devil had suggested. But had He, His becoming man would have been only "make-believe," wouldn't it? When the prince became a pauper in Mark Twain's story, he wasn't able to call on his rank. Jesus could

have "pulled rank" as the true Son of the Father, Satan urged him to — but He would not. That was His humility. Having become man, He would act as a man, accept the poverty, the limitations, of humanity: suffering, hunger, thirst, weariness, being like us in everything save sin.

He would work miracles, it is true, but only those that other prophets before Him had worked. And like them He would work them to manifest compassion, mercy, God's goodness — not to prove His divinity. Satan desired Jesus to break out of the confinement of His humanity and act like God, not like man. Thus the Incarnation would have been a glorious deception. A man trying to be God lost paradise. A God being a man — really and truly — alone could regain it.

Finally, about this whole matter of temptation, it is well to understand there are two kinds of temptation. (1) seductive — to lure to sin; and (2) diagnostic — to reveal one's strengths and weaknesses. Both the assassin and the physician cut: one to kill, the other to cure. Satan tempts to destroy, God to strengthen and reveal man to himself.

The temptations of Christ revealed to Him the power of the Spirit in Himself. Our temptations too can be revelatory.

"It is easy enough to be prudent when nothing tempts you to stray, when without or within your voice of sin is luring your soul away. But it's only a negative virtue until it is tried by fire, and the lite that is worth the honor on earth is the one that resists desire."

The language of love and the language of seduction are the same. The man who wants a girl for a wife and the one who wishes her for just one night both say, "I love." Jesus has showed us how to distinguish the language of seduction from the language of love, namely, by the word of God in Scripture as taught by the Church.

It was the word of God as proposed by Jesus (not by Satan) that devastated the tempter of all mankind.

### Business in the Diocese

Andrew Meloni and Beverly B. Moll have joined Edelweiss Properties, Realtors.

Mrs. Moll will concentrate her sales effort on the east and southeast sector of Monroe County. She has been corporate secretary of Christopher Press, Martin Q. Moll Publications and secretary-treasurer of Mebbcap Realty. She recently completed her real estate practice course at St. John Fisher College.

She has been active at St. Mary's Hospital, Our Lady of Lourdes and Our Lady Queen of Peace parishes, and at Brookside School in Brighton. She was a member of the Parents Board at Mercy High School and is secretary of the Rosary Altar Society at Our Lady Queen of Parish.

On Dec. 28, the Supreme Court of California admitted Thomas Joseph Testa to the California State Bar. On Dec. 29 he was sworn in as Deputy District Attorney of Sacramento, California.

Testa, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Testa of 130 Clay Ave., is a 1969 graduate of Cardinal Mooney. He earned his BA from the University of California at Berkeley campus and his JD degree from the University of California, Davis Law School.

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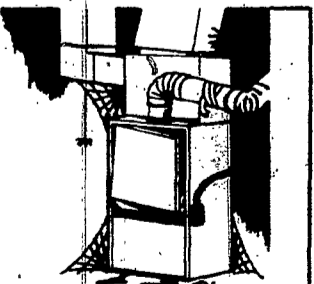
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