

# The Open Window

By FATHER HOHMAN

## Reflections On Sin And Guilt

Dear Reader,

Recently a lady wrote a letter answering my column on morality and conscience. She asked that the letter not be for publication, so I'm merely going to comment on some of the ideas she presented. This is on the presumption that once the letter is in my hands it belongs to me. She says in the course of the letter that all one has to do is look at the conditions in our country today to realize that we need religion. I sincerely hope that she does not think I disagree with that particular statement, in view of the fact that my life commitment is dedicated to the proposition that our country, and in fact the whole world, needs religion. She says that the country needs a good leader teaching religion, not religious leaders who today are saying that



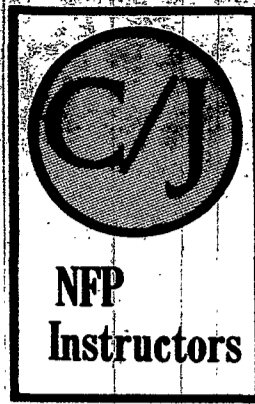
anything is all right as long as you believe it.

Now this lady is not the only one who is of the opinion that when I refuse to judge the guilt of a particular person performing a particular act, I am saying that the thing done is all right. It should be recognized that sin is sin and it causes harm no matter whether the person is guilty or not. For example, if one person kills another while in a state of insanity, the person who does the killing is not guilty of any sin, but nevertheless the sin is still there and the victim is just as dead. For some reason, the people who assail my position on morality fail to take this into consideration. They ask me: isn't anything a sin anymore? Doctor Menninger wrote a book on that particular subject entitled *Whatever Became of Sin?*

I do very definitely believe in the existence of sin, and whatever detracts from God by detracting from His creation, whatever does harm to things or persons in an irrational way, whatever does harm to the individual himself or herself is very definitely a sin, a moral evil.

Maybe what I need is a moratorium on discussing the guilt or non-guilt of persons in particular individual cases. Maybe I need to just say this is a sin and that is a sin and the next thing is a sin, and then say nothing about this whole business of guilt. The only reason I brought up guilt in the first place was that far too many people are making rash judgments about the moral condition of other people and are finding occasion to cast aspersions upon them as being guilty of things which they may or may not be guilty of. Only God can ascertain the guilt of non-guilt of a particular person. We certainly can perceive the evil that comes from sin and all sin is followed by evil consequences and therefore is rather easily discernable.

In conclusion I would like to state publicly that I feel very badly about the statements that are made over and over again that I and many other priests are not teaching religion and are not teaching the love of God. I challenge any of the individuals who make these statements to listen to the recording of 65 of my homilies of the last year, and determine as objectively as they can whether or not I am preaching the love of God and objective morality.



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## Red Mass Scheduled For Sept. 11

"St. Thomas More -- a Man of Principle" will be the topic of the Red Mass homily to be preached by Father Francis Pegnam. The Mass with Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey the main concelebrant is scheduled at 12:15 p.m., Monday, Sept. 11 at Old St. Mary's Church in Rochester.

The subject for the homily was chosen in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the birth of the Patron Saint of Lawyers, who was chancellor of England, Thomas More. Father Pegnam is pastor of St. Thomas More parish in Rochester.

Father Pegnam, who has made a study of the famous saint, has had an extraordinary involvement with St. Thomas More over the years.

He was ordained to the priesthood in 1937, two years after the completion of the sainthood of Thomas More. For 25 of his 41 years as a priest, he has been pastor of St. Thomas More.

In October, he will commemorate a bronze statue of the saint at the parish. Started in 1969, the statue is being sculpted and cast by Cipriani Brevis, who designed the only other statue of its kind located at Chelsea, England, the former residence of St. Thomas More.

The Red Mass is a tradition dating from the 4th Century. It marks the opening of local courts after the summer recess. Joseph G. DeMaria, president of the St. Thomas More Lawyers Guild which is arranging the Mass, said that the public is invited.

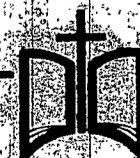
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**PLIGHT:** Starting with a near-tragic fire next door the day after Christmas 1977 and continuing with the deaths of two of our key personnel in one month, Ruth Schenk and Florence Daviau, TRANT'S has had to face difficult times lasting over a period of several months. Returning to some semblance of normalcy has been trying and difficult but very rewarding and gratifying. That is why we wish here and now to make public acknowledgement of the infinite goodness and mercy of God. Through the earnest prayers and sincere concern of countless numbers of people, we are now in a position to offer our many friends and customers the selections of religious articles they have come to expect from Trant's.

**THANKS:** Thanks are due to the hundreds of faithful customers who have been extremely patient with us while we could not render our customary good service.

**APOLOGIES:** Apologies are also due to the many who did not receive this service and were left disappointed. It was simply something beyond our control. We shall endeavor very conscientiously to make amends and to compensate for our short-comings.

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*Yours Truly,*  
*Robert M. Trant, Inc.*