

The Church 1978

By Father Andrew Greeley

Surface Changes Won't Help

Everyone was offering advice to Papa Gianpaolo Primo as to what ought to have been his agenda. And everyone, presumably, will offer advice to his successor. I will confess to being as guilty as anyone in offering unsolicited admonitions. Yet it seems to me that some suggested programs were better than others, and that two of the worst, characteristically, were to be found in the magazine Commonweal.

Charles Davis, the

former Catholic theologian, joins the long list of people who have discovered the moral development paradigm of Lawrence Kohlberg (a moral paradigm that makes Harvard professors the epitome of moral excellence). Davis suggests that the new pope ought to move the church beyond conventional or autonomous levels of moral consciousness.

Even if one accepts Kohlberg's paradigm as scientifically valid (and I for one certainly do not), it is inconceivable to me that anyone seriously believes that the Holy See is capable of effecting such a change in human moral attitudes. The pope can try to modify the rigid approach to moral problems that seems characteristic of

so many Catholics. Yet one would have to say that Paul VI did more to break down the authoritarian approach to morality among Catholics by issuing the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* than anyone else in recent history. Once people decided they could disagree with the official church on birth control, they became morally autonomous on many other things besides.

But if Charles Davis' advice to the new pope is esoteric, Richard McBrien's, in the same Commonweal issue, is notable only for its utter lack of originality. Father McBrien urges the new pope to revoke the anti-contraception teaching of *Humanae Vitae*, abolish obligatory celibacy and "set in motion" forces which will lead to the ordination of women to the priestly and episcopal ministry.

One wonders why space in the Commonweal needs to be taken up for such

standard liberal shibboleths. It would be utterly ridiculous to repeal *Humanae Vitae*, since the encyclical is a dead letter as far as the Catholics of the world are concerned. A document developing a Catholic theory of sexuality and or eroticism would indeed be very valuable, but that would require more theological background work than is currently available, and I must confess I do not see theologians like Father McBrien doing such background work.

The ordination of married men may be a possibility in some countries, particularly in the Third World. The chances for a change which would make celibacy optional through the universal church are virtually nonexistent simply because there is not enough support for such change among the hierarchy, and while there is support from the laity, it is not an issue about which

very many lay people feel all that strongly one way or another. Finally, while I believe in the ordination of women (and have considerable reservations on optional celibacy—a combination of positions which may make me unique), there is no widespread demand for the ordination of women in most Catholic countries; and even in the United States where the demands are strongest, the crusade does not have majority support.

This may be unjust, but nevertheless causes do not win simply because they are just; they win because careful spadework has been done beforehand. I fail to see this work being done either by theologians like Father McBrien or by those women who seem so enthusiastic to be ordained. For weal or woe that change is most unlikely to occur.

But let us suppose that

all three of Father McBrien's changes did in fact occur, that *Humanae Vitae* was repealed, that priests could marry and that women could be ordained. Would any of the fundamental human and religious problems of our era be changed? Would the gospel be preached any more clearly? Would hope be instilled any more strongly? Would marginal Catholics be attracted back to the church? Would fallen-away Catholics give the church a second thought? Would the enormous number of unchurched who are vaguely looking for something to believe in find Catholicism all that much more attractive?

The answers to these questions must, I fear, be no. Father McBrien deals with symptoms, not basic causes. The church must rethink its position vis-a-vis the modern world and especially vis-a-vis human sexuality.

Women in World Theme of Series

An educational program dealing with The Christian Woman in the Contemporary World is being sponsored this season by the Adult Education Committee of St. John the Evangelist Church on Humboldt St.

According to Carol La Centra of the parish, the series is "an examination of the changing perceptions of the Christian woman's view of herself and her role; and the implications of these perceptions for family, church and society."

In the opening lecture last night at the parish center, Michele Daviau established the scriptural foundations for the discussions that will follow. Her talk was entitled "Women and the New Testament: Jesus, Women and the Law in St. Luke." Ms. Daviau, a

scripture scholar, is a professional in the field of adult religious education.

Sister Gratia L'Esperance will address "Issues Facing the Christian Woman Today," on Wednesday, Oct. 25, at 7:30 p.m.

Sister Gratia is assistant director of field education at St. Bernard's Seminary. In her lecture she will present the doctrinal and social bases of the new understandings of woman's role in family, Church and society

The final event in the series will be a panel discussion on Thursday, Nov. 2, at 7:30 p.m. The panel, to be composed of men and women, will present a wide spectrum of views on the changing roles of women. A question and answer period will follow.

Fr. Miceli Magisterium Lecturer

Father Vincent Miceli, SJ, will be the featured speaker at the third in a series of Magisterium Lectures sponsored by the Knights of Columbus and the St. Thomas More Lawyers Guild.

Father Miceli's topic will be "The Church and the Family" at 7:45 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 18 (tonight) at Mercy High School, 1437 Blossom Road.

Father Miceli was born of Italian immigrant parents in New York City in 1915, the ninth of ten children.

In 1936 he entered the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) and in 1942 received his bachelor's degree from Spring Hill College. Ordained in 1949, he received his STL from St. Louis University in 1950 and his Ph. D. from Fordham in 1961.

Father Miceli is visiting professor of philosophy at Rome's Gregorian University. He has taught at Loyola University in New Orleans and became something of a



FATHER MICELI

television personality with a local program.

He has written a book, "Gabriel Marcel's Philosophy of Communion," and many magazine articles.

The lecture concludes the Fall series of Magisterium Lectures which also included Father Paul Marx and Dr. Harold Voth.

A Natural Family Planning workshop is scheduled for the Spring.

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