

The Open Window

By FATHER HOHMAN

Why Do Priests Wear Black?

Dear Father Hohman,

A little girl in CCD class asked me why priests always wear black. I could not answer her. Can you?



G.K.

Dear G.K.,

I have not had the time to look up in an encyclopedia the origin of wearing black by priests but the meaning of it was given to us while we were still in the Seminary. It is a sign of detachment from the world. Because it does not go along with the fashions of the world (color wise) it indicates that we really don't care that much about worldly pursuits or values. I find that the trouble with that is that in terms of other world values we don't seem to have too much of a problem. It would seem to me it would be much more valuable to witness to poverty by living more simply than by dressing in black.

You should know and realize that in other parts of the world priests do not dress in black (notably Northern Europe) but rather in ordinary street suit and tie. In South America we noticed that the priests for the most part dressed quite informally — along the lines of the natives of those countries.

Which brings up the question of habits or uniforms. Many people are disturbed over the fact that some priests do not wear black either any of the time or part of the time and that the sisters have for the most part switched to ordinary street clothes. What many people forget is that the habits which the sisters had worn were nothing more or less than the garb of women of the time that the order was founded. There may be one or two exceptions to that rule but they are only exceptions. It also should be quite evident that at least for the first 300 years in the Church the idea of particular clerical clothes was simply not known.

Some people see in the wearing of black clothes by priests or habits by sisters a certain symbolism or sign value. I think that many of the priests and sisters who tend toward ordinary clothes are saying that it is very important that I not be accepted because I am of a certain caste or community but rather that I reflect in my life and work the goodness of Christ. That simply means that it would be much tougher to appear as a priest or sister because it is not an easy thing to reflect in word and action the person of Jesus Christ. What they are saying is that they simply don't want their clothes to do the talking but rather their lives. That may or may not be a realizable ideal but that is the purpose. It is not to avoid being recognized as a priest or as a religious.

Wordsworth Descendant To Portray Poet's Life

British actor Richard Wordsworth, great-great grandson of the poet William Wordsworth, will present a program Sunday of poetry and other readings designed to bring to life the "Wordsworth Circle." The program, at 8 p.m. Dec. 3 in the Nazareth Arts Center, is open to the public without charge.

The performer is in residence at Nazareth, where he has been lecturing in the Theatre Arts and English departments. Forty years an actor, he has appeared in classical and modern drama, musicals, movies and television productions, and at various times has been a

member of such distinguished British companies as the Old Vic and the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre of Stratford-on-Avon.

St. Cecelia's Vigil Planned

"Focus on the Eucharist Mass and Evening Vigil" will visit St. Cecelia's Church, 2732 Culver Road, Thursday Dec. 7.

Evening prayer is scheduled for 7:30 with the Mass at 8:15. Exposition will follow.

Father Robert Klem of St. Basil's Novitiate will officiate.

THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

"A Time of Recovery"

By Ed Sulewski

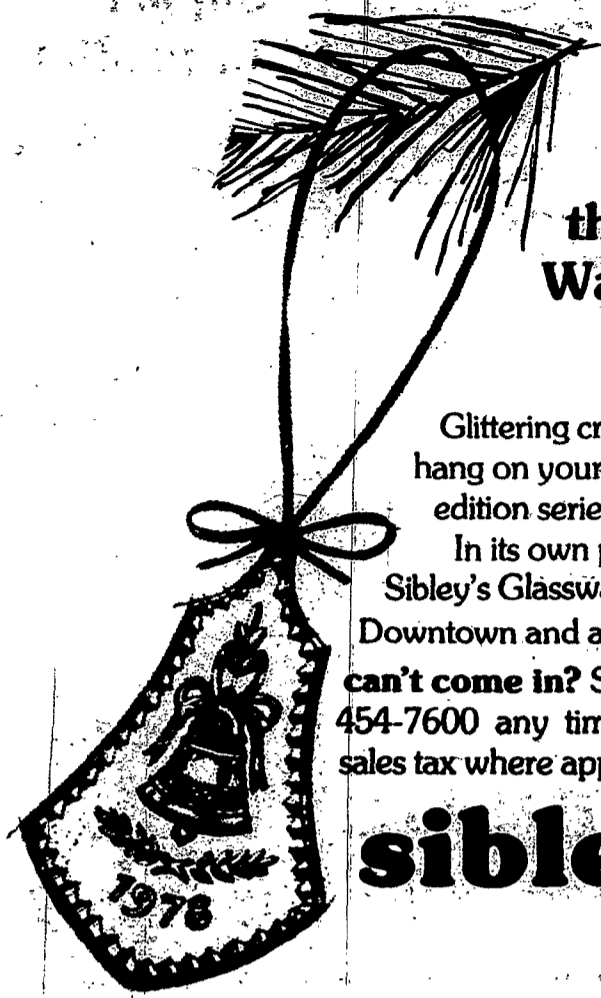
If you have recently experienced the death of someone close to you, you probably find yourself in a time of great emotional stress. Your normal love of life and all it offers may be temporarily suspended, as you face a period of adjustment and recovery.

Each individual works through grief in his own way. Some are able to accept help from family and friends — others draw inside themselves, and find this a time that it is difficult to relate to others.

For several weeks — or months — you may find yourself almost continually aware of your loss, with it seldom far from your thoughts. However, as the months pass, and you become more aware of life continuing around you, you will find that your thoughts once again begin to return to your own interests.

Time — is probably the greatest healer. We can help in your adjustment. Please consult with any member of our staff.

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