

The Open Window

By FATHER HOHMAN

Questions For Christians To Examine

Dear Father Hohman, I agree wholeheartedly with what you see as the fruitful and substantive questions we should be asking as Christians. These are exactly the kinds of questions to which a good deal of our community are seeking answers.

I can see where the authority of the Church, as it is interpreted for us now (and that can vary greatly from diocese to diocese, parish to parish, priest to priest) can be either a help or an obstacle. Take just

one example: sacramental celebration. Strict adherence to liturgical norms (e.g. the rites of Penance) can be an easy way for some parishes to avoid "quibbling" over the form of the sacrament. However, for a community of people who have pursued the more important questions concerning their own relationships with God and with one another, the norms and directives from Rome can be an obstacle to an honest, fully communal celebration of God's love and forgiveness.

A deep faith in our dynamic and loving God can free a person spiritually from the "peripheral" religious issues, but if such a person wishes to serve and celebrate within the institutional framework of the Catholic Church he finds himself confronting

these issues all the time. I think part of our duty as members of today's changing Church is to confront these issues head on in a totally honest way, with a vision born of an ever-deepening personal faith. It seems obvious that God's will is for change in every aspect of life in this world. Like it or not, these peripheral issues are a large part of today's religious dialogue. I think our Church is still just in the early stages of growth, just learning how to walk. It's an exciting stage, but a difficult one. The Church has taken quite a few hard falls, but it still has to confront the problems in learning how to walk correctly before it can gain enough balance to run.

I'd like to see you deal with the important questions too. But I admire your courage to take on the highly emotional peripheral issues that people are screaming about. You do a great service for the people of the

diocese. Hang in there! Every house needs at least one "open window" not only to let the good air in, but also to let the suffocating, stale air out. Maybe if you wore a gas mask when you opened your mail it would help.

Yours truly,
(Signed) R.T.

Dear R.T.,

As far as I am concerned, your letter expresses very clearly and beautifully what I feel about a whole group of people who are honestly searching for deeper faith and sometimes find regulations, even from Rome, as obstacles. I do not think this is disrespect to Rome, but rather a way of saying that these things need to be talked about and reexamined in the light of new developments or new insights. Incidentally, I can deal with the important and vital questions only as they are presented to me. I do not initiate the questions I deal with.

Holiday Hours at RG&E

In observance of the Christmas holiday, all RG&E offices will be closed on Monday, December 25.

Emergency service is always available at RG&E, 24 hours a day. For gas or electric emergency service in the Rochester and Monroe County area, call 546-1100 (or 454-1133).

For customers in other parts of our service area, emergency service is available through our district offices. Please consult your local telephone directory for the appropriate telephone number in your area.

Normal business hours will be resumed for all our offices on Tuesday, December 26.



All in the Family

By Sarah Child

Some Ideas For Giving

Dear Readers,

As Christmas grows nearer, the appeals from various charities for food, for clothing, for toys, for money escalate.

They are authentic cries for help. And as we hear of each new one, the response at our house is one of great gratitude that we are in the position to be asked for help. There, but for the grace of God, goes our family - and yours.

Because God has seen fit to put us, for the time being at least, in the donor category instead of the needy one, it seems only fitting to respond in kind.

If anyone reading this finds himself still saying that they can't "think of a thing" to give a certain uncle, cousin or employer "because they have everything," then please sit down right now and write a check to the Courier-Journal Christmas Appeal for someone who has nothing. Send it to Catholic Charities, 50 Chestnut St., Rochester, N.Y. 14604. Catholic Charities will send you a card saying that you have made a donation in the name of the person "who has everything" if you include his or her name and address.

Were your children unable to think of anything they wanted this year? You have only five gifts stashed away for each? Wonder what else you can add to the pile?

Go to the store and take them with you. Pick out a toy for a child who will receive nothing this year. Wrap and write the age level it was intended for. Take it to your church if it is collecting toys; if not drop it off at an inner-city parish or any parish where many families are fatherless or where the breadwinners are out of work. It might be the most memorable gift your own child "receives" this year.

Is there an older person on your list? If he or she is on a fixed income, they are undoubtedly being pinched

by inflation. A check for the utilities for one month might be a Godsend.

Gifts of appropriate food are treasured. At this time of bad weather a box of nutritious, non-perishable items is a wonderful way of showing one's love and concern in the best of holiday tradition. What items? A jar of cheese, small cans of tuna, corned beef, salmon, chicken, ham, canned or dry soups in small serving sizes, a box of special crackers, canned fruit and juice, peanut butter, a favorite jelly. Tuck notes, hints, recipes in the box to personalize it. Your thoughtfulness will continue to bring cheer over the longer winter weeks ahead.



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