More Opinions

Answer Fount Wanting

Editor:

Wouldn't it be helpful if, on occasion, when one writes to "The Open Window" seeking clarification on a particualr church doctrine, one might find that window truly open. W.P. writes (Courier-Journal 11/1/78) asking if the teaching of the Church concerning indulgences has changed since his "early Catholic school days."

Without any reference to Vatican II's beautiful document on indulgences, the inquirer is treated to a somewhat subjective analysis of the relative unimportance of indulgences in Father Louis Hohman's own "total Christian life."

Granting of course that the Mass and the sacraments, especially Holy Eucharist and and penance, are certainly preeminent means of sanctification, one can only speculate as to the importance Father Hohman attaches to the rosary, Benediction, stations of the Cross and other pious practices whose purposes are to unite the hearts and minds of the faithful to Almighty God and in charity to every member of the Mystical Body of Christ. Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, in fact, imparted a plenary indulgence to all who attended, listened to or watched on television the installation Mass on Oct. 22.

Father Hohman however seems to cast some measure of doubt not only on the validity of indulgences, but also on the authority of the Church having the power of the keys. The Apostolic Constitution on the Revision of Indulgences leaves no such doubt at all. This document can be found in Austin Flannery's "Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents." It is a most important book for anyone who has a question concerning precisely what Vatican II teaches in contradistinction to what has been presented in the past few years by some individuals, creating confusion and uncertainty among the faithful.

Quoting directly from this document:

"The doctrine of indulgences and their practice have been in force for many centuries in the Catholic Church. They would appear to be solidly founded on divine Revelation, handed down from the apostles."

"In fact, in granting an indulgence the Church uses its power as minister of Christ's redemption. It not only prays. It intervenes with its authority to dispense to the faithful, provided they have the right dispositions, the treasury of satisfaction which Christ and the saints won for the remission of temporal punishment.

"It (the Church) 'teaches and commands that the usage of indulgences — a usage most beneficial to Christians and approved by the authority of the Sacred Councils — should be kept in the Church; and it condemns with anathema those who say that indulgences are useless or that the Church does not have the power to grant them.'"

There is of course much, much more to this document. Do read it in its entirety for a fuller understanding of one of the very beautiful doctrines of our Holy Faith.

Dorothy H. Polzinetti
108 Troy St.
Seneca Falls, N.Y. 13148

Void Seen In Priorities

Editor:

We have been selected to answer the Selection of Bishops Consultation Questionnaire. This is a very serious matter and we do not feel qualified to effectively evaluate the specific personal characteristics needed in choosing a bishop of our diocese. But, we certainly do see a big void in the area of choices available concerning priorities for building the Kingdom of God in our diocese (Part I, Section II — Priorities).

We see a very basic priority of the diocese, that is its being a vehicle by which every member can reach his/her own eternal reward. Family planning and its moral obligations is certainly in the realm of this quest, affecting every married couple in the diocese. Nothing of this nature is mentioned in the suggested pricrity choices, but certainly deals with the largest percentage of the diocesan population.

As a couple taking the Instructor Training Course for Natural Family Planning, we see a great need for diocesan support in this area. Natural Family Planning Education of Rochester, New York, Inc. is an independent (independent only because of the lack of adequate support from the diocese) organization of highly devoted, skilled and knowledgeable couples who have chosen to help others in the diocese adhere to the moral obligations of Humanae Vitae and to offer a highly effective alternative to artificial contraception.

NFP needs a widespread "umbrella" under which it can most effectively work toward informing the most couples about the method.

The diocese can be this important vehicle. We hope that the diocese and the new administration will consider NFP as a very important ministry for its Church family.

Earl and Judy Knab
22 Southcross Trail
Fairport, N.Y. 14450

Help Free Father Fell

Editor:

In 1973, Father Patrick Fell, an assistant at All Saints' Church in Coventry, England, was sentenced on the flimsiest of evidence to 12 years imprisonment for being a member of the Coventry unit of the Irish Republican Army. He was sentenced with Frank Stagg, who later died on hunger strike. It is generally thought that Father Fell may not have been found guilty if he was not a Catholic priest.

While in jail, Father Fell has been beaten and assaulted by prison warders. He has had bones broken and has been held in solitary confinement much of the time, "for his own protection."

He has been eligible for parole since April of last year, but has been refused parole by British Home Secretary Merlyn Rees. Father Fell has an aged father in Ireland who is not in good health and cannot travel to see his son in prison. Father Fell is not allowed any other visitors.

If this terrible situation was taking place in any South American or Eastern European country, politicians, government officials, and the Church hierarchy would vehemently protest this deplorable injustice.

I would like to ask any of your readers who may be concerned about this matter to write to the British Home Secretary, 89 Eccleston Sq. London SW1V 1PU, asking him to parole Father Fell so that he can return to Ireland and his family. If enough interest is shown in this country perhaps Father Fell will be paroled by Rees.

Michael D. McLoughlin,
president,
Massachusetts Chapter
National Council of
Irish Americans,
46 Woodland St.
Worcester, Mass. 01610

Was He Irreverent?

Editor:

What could have caused Catholics to drop the title of "Father" when they address a priest? Fr. Paul Cuddy was obviously disturbed by such a question in his column of Nov. 7. A personal experience had pushed him into a consideration of that question.

During his entire conversation with a student of a Catholic high school, Fr. Cuddy noted that the young man never addressed him as "Father". Fr. Cuddy did more. In the same column he implied that there was a trend growing among Catholics, especially young Catholics to omit or disregard the title of "Father" as it applied to a priest.

In search of a correct answer to the question, I studied two headings in "The Catholic Encyclopedic Dictionary," (General Editor Donald Atwater, The Macmillan Co., 1931, N.Y.). The first heading was titled: "Father" is by right the title of a mendicant friar, but in speech it is extended to all priests of the regular clergy. In English speaking countries it is used in address and reference for all Catholic priests (in England it is not 50 years old; secular priests were "Mr." and "sir", as they still are at Ushaw (a Catholic seminary); in Catholic countries they are 'Monsieur l'abbe, monsieur le cure, or as the case may be 'signor', don', etc. All priests of Eastern rites are "Father".

The failure to address a Catholic priest as "Father" may also suggest a lack of necessary respect for his office. For that reason I turned to the heading "reverence". In common speech (reverence) is often used as synonymous with its exterior manifestations: bowings, genuflections, tiptoeing, a chastened voice, kissing of rings, removal of the hat or putting it on ... these are purely arbitary and easily overemphasized: the Latin Catholic genuflects before the Blessed Sacrament, the Byzantine Catholic bows; it is deemed irreverent to applaud in church in England, but not so in Rome; some dutiful sons call their father "sir", others, equally dutiful, "old thing"; reverence is an attitude of the mind, but again must not be confused with that emotion which causes some people to assume a forbidding expression of face when confronted by something impressive, e.g. the nave of Winchester Cathedral."

The information I obtained from the articles on "Father" and "Reverence" in "The Catholic Encyclopedic Dictionary" brought me to some conclusions.

If "Father" is only used in the (Catholic) English-speaking world, it is surely not a necessary or inevitable title for a priest in the non-English-speaking (Catholic) world. If 'reverence' be an exterior manifestation or "an attitude of the mind", then surely it can be shown by a hypocrite or a liar. Young people today tend to avoid any kind of formality. The title of "Father" is being pushed out of the vocabulary of "reverence" through the increasing breakdown of the family where "father" is no longer the head. I find much to forgive and forget about the young student's failure to address Fr. Cuddy as "Father".

The late Pope John XXIII, when his private telephone rang, would not say: "This is Pope John XXIII speaking, or this is the Supreme Pontiff speaking, or even Pope John". He just gave his family name: "Roncalli parla", (Roncalli speaking).

John J. A. Overlander
201 Wimbledon Road
Rochester, N.Y., 14617

Promote Blue Army

Editor:

Now that Bishop Joseph L. Hogan has resigned, it is my earnest wish that the next bishop of the Diocese of Rochester will start to implement the Blue Army Cadets of Our Lady of Fatima in our Catholic Schools.

By implementing the Cadets, not only will the children have a reverence for our Blessed Mother, but will combat the irreverence shown her.

Charles G. Mikeltish
205 Chestnut Ridge Rd.
Rochester, N.Y. 14624

Basketball's Real Values

Editor:

The Catholic Youth Organization of Rochester has just begun its 30th basketball season and will include 119 teams of boys and girls competing in four divisions.

That's 1775 Catholic parish young people from fifth and sixth grade through high school playing in the CYO basketball program and about 700 parish young people participating as cheerleaders. A total of 46 parishes in Monroe County have entered one or more teams. These programs are more than a competitive outlet for youth. CYO believes that the youth participants grow and develop as persons through the guidance and caring sensitivity of the nearly 300 adults who volunteer their services as coaches of parish teams during the season.

The youth participants and their adult volunteer coaches are highly motivated to create a worthwhile experience for each other. It is so important that both youth and adults are recognized for their efforts. The experience becomes so much more worthwhile when parish councils, families and parish staff people support their CYO basketball teams by attending games and giving encouragement and helping hands.

It is, however, critical for coaches and parents to remember that their conduct on the bench or in the stands serves as an example to these young people. While every athletic team is coached to win and plays to win, the final scores of this year's games are so insignificant when compared to the real values to be derived from this program — team spirit, sportsmanship, and a sense of community. Winning, in its finest sense, is defined as doing one's very best, no matter what the final numbers on the scoreboard may be.

If we all make this program a positive experience this year, then we will have 2,455 winners — that's what it's all about!

William F. Schmitz
Vice president
CYO Board of Directors
50 Chestnut St.
Rochester, N.Y. 14604

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