

# The Church 1979

By Father Andrew Greeley

## Public Opinion In The Church

There has been a quiet revolt among American Catholic bishops, a revolt which has served warning on the leadership of the hierarchy that it is responsible to those who elected it and does not have the unlimited power the ecclesiastical giants of yesteryear possessed. The implications of this quiet revolt to the ordinary Catholic in the pew are potentially very important.



Fr. Greeley

The issue was budget, as it is in most organizations today. The national office of the bishops has been caught in a severe financial bind as a result of inflation and the propensity of the national staff to embark on grandiose projects and campaigns with little regard to what either the laity or the ordinary bishop thinks of them. Faced with the need to cut back on staff budget, the officers of the hierarchy, principally

San Francisco's John Quinn and St. Paul's John Roach, decided to go after two offices which had been thorns in the side of some bishops, that of Monsignor George Higgins, a veteran labor priest who is due to retire in a year and a half, and Sister Anne Neale, a specialist in technology and human values.

Higgins was, objectionable because of his support for unionists like Cesar Chavez's farm workers. Sister Neale was objectionable presumably because she was a nun thinking about such things as energy, DNA research and artificial insemination — hardly appropriate subjects for a nun to know anything about, according to many right-wing Catholics.

The decision was made by a small executive committee and not referred to the administrative board of the bishops but simply announced. Apparently, much to the surprise of Archbishops Quinn and Roach, the roof fell in. In a staff in which the amateurs and the enthusiasts far outnumber competent professionals, Higgins and Neale were extremely competent professionals.

widely respected by scholars and practitioners in their fields. Few people know as much about labor as George Higgins, and Sister Neale's position papers on technology and values have been unerringly precise and balanced.

Furthermore, their dismissal, in addition to being a violation of the justice which the church preaches to all other quarters, was interpreted as a sign that the church was officially withdrawing interest in social action and scientific concerns just at a time when those two areas seem to be more important than ever before. "Is it not worth \$30,000 a year," complained one Catholic scientist, "for the church to keep informed on such things as artificial insemination and DNA?"

Outrage at the Higgins dismissal was particularly intense because the monsignor had served the bishops with single-minded dedication for more than three decades and was being rewarded for that service with a kick in the teeth.

Not all the members of the executive committee agreed with the decision in the first place; and, under tremendous pressure from laity and clergy all over the country, the Higgins decision was revoked before the mid-November

bishops' meeting. But Archbishop Quinn elected to fight it out on the technology and human values office.

After a stormy session of the administrative board, the budget for the Committee on Technology and Human Values was restored, a crushing defeat for Quinn and Roach and a victory for those bishops who believe that in critical times, if you have to cut the budget, the last people to go ought to be your most competent professionals.

So church leadership cannot back away from its commitment to social action or scientific concerns. But more important, the decisions of church leadership in areas of administration and finance are now seen to be subject to procedural review by the rest of the bishops, and in fact, by concerned laity and clergy, whose pressure from outside the hierarchy led to the reversal of the Higgins decision and prepared the way for the floor fight on the Neale decision. Public opinion now can and does play an important part in the decision-making of the Catholic church. Archbishops Quinn and Roach and their successors will think twice before they try to take on again an aroused, informed public opinion.

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# Insights In Liturgy The Year of Mark

BY MSGR. WILLIAM H. SHANNON PART I

In order that we may have a rich fare of scripture readings in the liturgy, the Liturgical Year is arranged according to a three-year cycle, each with its own proper readings. The three yearly cycles are designated by the letters A, B, C. The C year is always divisible by three. The year 1980, being divisible by three is the C year. This means, therefore, that this present year 1979 is year B.

Each yearly cycle, in turn, is divided into three main sections: 1. Advent-Christmas (this year, Nov. 27, 1978, to Jan. 7, 1979); 2. the Lent-Easter season (this year, Feb. 28 to June 3, 1979); 3. Ordinary time (this year, Jan. 8 to Feb. 27 and June 4 to Dec. 1, 1979).

This year, being the B year, is the year of Mark. Just as Matthew's Gospel predominated the Sunday readings of Ordinary time in the A year and Luke's in the C year, so Mark's Gospel predominates during the B year (especially during the Sundays of Ordinary time and in Holy Week). During the Sundays of Ordinary time, Mark's Gospel is read as a continuous reading; at the beginning and close of Holy Week, the Passion and resurrection narratives from Mark are read. The following schema shows how Mark's Gospel is distributed through year B (1979).

Mark	Sundays	Date
1:1-8	2nd Sunday of Advent	Dec. 10, 1978
1:7-11	Baptism of the Lord	Jan. 8, 1979
1:12-15	1st Sunday of Lent	March 4, 1979
1:14-2:22	3rd to 8th Sunday of Ordinary time	Jan. 21 to Feb. 25, 1979
3:20-4:40	These sections of Mark are assigned to the 10th, 11th and 12th Sundays of Ordinary time, but this year they are replaced by the special readings for Trinity Sunday, Corpus Christi and St. John the Baptist, respectively.	
5:21-6:34	13th to 16th Sunday of Ordinary time.	July 1 to July 22, 1979
At this point, in place of the feeding miracle in Mark, the discourse on the Bread of Life in John 6:1-69 is read for five Sundays. (The reason for this insertion is the brevity of Mark's Gospel).	17th to 21st Sunday of Ordinary time.	July 29 to Aug. 26, 1979
7:1-13:22	22nd to 33rd Sunday of Ordinary time.	Sept. 2 to Nov. 18, 1979
14:1-15:47	Passion (Palm) Sunday.	April 8, 1979
16:1-18	Easter Vigil	April 14, 1979

This schema is not intended to confuse. It is hoped that parish worship-committees and homilists will keep it on hand and find it helpful in getting an overview of the Sunday Gospels and seeing the way in which Mark's Gospel sets the tone for this year's liturgies, especially during the Sundays of Ordinary time and in the passion and resurrection narratives of Holy Week.

The predominance of Mark's Gospel in 1979 suggests the value for priests and people of studying Mark's Gospel during this year in order to grasp the unique way in which this, the shortest of the Gospels, proclaims the good news of salvation. To the end, next week's article will suggest some of the themes that are discernible in Mark's Gospel.

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