



## A Blessing

Phuong Thi Tran (center), who arrived in the U.S. in 1975 as a Vietnamese refugee, received her master's degree in education from Nazareth College last Sunday, May 13. She and her husband, Luat Huu Tran (right), threw a party for some 300 guests at their new Penfield Road home, where Father Nguyen Duc Tien (left) celebrated a Mass of thanksgiving for the new home and the new degree.

## Contraceptive Ads Challenged

Albany (RNS) - The State Catholic Conference, the action agency representing the eight Catholic dioceses in the state, has protested legislation that would remove age restrictions for the sale or distribution of contraceptives.

The conference argued that removing the current ban on selling or distributing contraceptives to persons under the age of 16 would increase

sexual promiscuity and not control unwanted pregnancies.

Charles J. Tobin, executive director of the conference, in a letter to members of the State Assembly, said that the conference objected to proposed legislation which would remove restrictions on advertising contraceptives.

In a 1977 decision, the Supreme Court ruled that a

New York State law totally banning such advertising was unconstitutional.

"The attempt to throw out the entire law, as is now being proposed in the legislature, is not a proper response to the court decision," Tobin said. "Particular attention has to be paid to advertisement in the electronic media and in places where children can be affected."

## The Church 1979

By Father Andrew Greeley

### A Newspaper That's Dull And Routine

One of the worst disgraces in the American church is the national edition of Our Sunday Visitor. I do not mind its conservatism.



Fr. Greeley

There is a place for a conservative journal. But its dreadfully dull news coverage, its veneer of tripe piety and its bland portrait of contemporary American Catholicism is unprofessional, unimaginative and unintelligent. Given its enormous circulation and the large number of potential readers (those who buy it in the back of the church, one suspects, do so out of devotion rather than the expectation that they'll find anything interesting in it), Our Sunday Visitor ought to be a brisk, readable, objective Catholic "paper of record". Instead, unfortunately, it is dull, trivial, and routine. It has also managed to turn nasty in its recent editorials.

Editor Father Nevins, or one of his associates, recently charged those of us who are concerned about anti-Catholicism with being hypocrites. If you criticize the hierarchy, says the editorial writer, then you're playing the game of the anti-Catholics and providing them with the raw materials for their anti-Catholicism.

A charge like that, one might have expected 30 years ago when there may have been some plausibility

to the argument that all criticism of the church played into the hands of the church's enemies, but in an era when even the pope will admit in his recent encyclical that some of the criticism is valid, Our Sunday Visitor's demand for unquestioning, silent loyalty to ecclesiastical leadership looks archaic, to say the least.

Apparently, Our Sunday Visitor's editorial writer thinks I should not have criticized such recent hierarchical adventures as The Call to Action tent show in Detroit, the miserable Catechetical Directory, the attempted firing of Msgr. George Higgins, the pathetically weak excuse for research that emerges from the hierarchy's national office. Apparently incompetence, injustice, unprofessional behavior and bungling are all to be suffered in silence lest it provide grist for the anti-Catholic mills.

The OSV editorial writer is either naive or uninformed. Fashionable elite anti-Catholicism has nothing to do with the administrative ineptitudes of the national hierarchy, but rather focuses on the church's abortion teaching, on Catholic schools, on the alleged docility of Catholics to their ecclesiastical leaders, on the inability of Catholics to be independent thinkers and competent scholars, on the archaic absurdity of the papacy (as the anti-Catholics see it) and on Catholic political power in the big cities.

In other words, nativist bigotry hasn't changed much in the last century and a half. It hates us for the same reasons it always hated

us, and it does not need and does not use our own internal criticism and freedom of discussion to provide it with raw material.

The OSV editorial writer should realize that the enormous success of anti-Catholic bigotry in recent years has not been caused by criticism of the hierarchy but by the hierarchy's adamant refusal to fight back, particularly under the leadership of Archbishop John R. Quinn of San Francisco, who seems psychologically incapable of speaking out against neo-nativist bigotry.

It is hard to think of anything less important than an editorial in Our Sunday Visitor. It is not likely to have any impact at all, but it is a discouraging symbol of our willingness to acquiesce to the neo-nativists. With its enormous circulation, the newspaper could have a tremendous amount of influence in mobilizing American Catholics to resist the surge of prejudice against Catholics, particularly in the federal bureaucracy. Instead, it is content to score cheap and inadequate debating points in mean-spirited editorials.

Bishop William McManus of Fort Wayne-South Bend, the president of Our Sunday Visitor, and one of the most intelligent bishops in the hierarchy, has always had the highest respect for professional excellence. He has been patient with the mediocrities at Our Sunday Visitor too long.

I want to thank the directors of the Catholic Press Association for awarding their Best Short Story Prize to my tale, "Ms. Carpenter." I am also grateful to the editors of U.S. Catholic for publishing the story, and to the real-life model of Ms. Carpenter. As to who she is, well, you'll have to read the story to find out.

## His Ministry 'Pushes' Prayers and Humor

Albany — He's a pusher. One of the biggest.

Every place he goes he tries to unload his goods. He'll pull you aside and try to make you a deal. And though he hangs around college students a lot, he hits on every age group. He might get you at a fire department dinner, at a women's group luncheon, even as you're coming out of church on Sunday morning. He works with a hood. He indiscriminate.

And don't get the idea that he's just a local pusher. He's a heavy and his operation is international in scope. You should hear him rattle off the nationalities he's dealt with: English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, Italian, German, Gaelic Irish, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Slovak, Tamil, Japanese and Russian.

"The more I get around, the rounder I get," he always says.

Yes, he's one of the biggest pushers.

Of "Family Prayer Cards," that is. Or, at least, Father Ben Kuhn still calls them cards. What he actually deals out are not cards at all, but folding brochures of prayers. He stopped printing the cards several years ago.

They were difficult to send through the mail. Besides, people would use them as fans in the summertime," he says.

Most people in the Albany area know who Father Ben is. At around 300 pounds, he's not easy to miss. He's one of the brown hooded founding Franciscan fathers of Siena College, Loudonville — the only one who's still there. He's notorious as a speaker (and as a joker) and gets anywhere from 100 to 200 engagements a year. (His topics range from ecumenism to ecology to dry swimming, he says, tongue-in-cheek, as usual.)

And wherever he goes he brings his prayer cards. Since 1960, he's distributed more than one and a half million in English, 400,000 in Spanish, and the rest of the two million in the languages mentioned above.

Orders for his prayer cards come from all around the country and throughout the world. Thirty-seven thousand of them in Gaelic have made their way to Scotland, Ireland, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland. Fifty thousand in Spanish, his biggest order, came from Redemptorist Fathers in Puerto Rico.

The Legion of Mary at parishes helps to disperse thousands of them, as do hospitals and religious education instructors. Ten years ago, at the Ecumenistic Congress in Philadelphia, 31,000 of them were given out, gratis, by a group called Heraldry of Divine Love. (It's usually a dollar per hundred, which is less than cost, for orders that big. Only a dollar, because "people won't put uneven money in an envelope," he

says.)

He used to count them out: "One, two, three, four, five, six seven. Say these

prayers and go to heaven." Now he's got a new slogan: "Say these prayers to forget your cares."

## High Court Sets Back Abortion Funding

Washington, D.C. (RNS) - The U.S. Supreme Court dealt a setback to advocates of public funding of abortion here when it declined to hear their appeal that states are under obligation to pay for abortions for indigent women.

The appeal to the high court is but one in a series of moves by abortion advocates to nullify the effect of the Hyde Amendment, first passed by Congress in December 1977 as a rider to

the Department of Health, Education and Welfare appropriations bill.

The original Hyde Amendment, which forbade the use of HEW funds for abortion except to save the life of the mother, was broadened last year to include abortions for victims of rape or incest and "in those instances where severe and long-lasting physical damage to the mother would result."

## New Deacons Given Parish Assignments

The Pastoral Office announced last week the parish assignments of three newly ordained deacons and of two other St. Bernard's men who have not reached the diaconate.

Schramel, at St. Ambrose.

Parish assignments were given also to Dennis Bon-signore — at Our Lady of Lourdes, Elmira — and John Vellekkakan — at Blessed Sacrament.

The Rev. Mr. Timothy J. McClusky will serve his deacon internship at St. Andrew's, Rochester; the Rev. Mr. Joseph E. Larabee, at Holy Ghost, Coldwater, and the Rev. Mr. Michael

Michael Sullivan and Gary Schummer, who are studying Spanish, will become deacons after the close of summer school, the announcement said.

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## THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER

"Children -- and the Truth"



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When someone a child has known or has been close to dies, he should be told of that death by another person who is equally close to him. And, even though it may be a temptation at the time, never try to deny or gloss over the fact of death. Don't tell a child that "Mother is on a trip", that "Daddy has gone to sleep", or that "Grandpa is living in the hospital." These explanations are misleading unintentionally, perhaps -- but still far, very far, from the truth.

More than most of us realize, children are able to stand up under the truth. They are capable of releasing their deepest emotions much more easily than adults. The child may cry, the scene may be painful, but any other reaction would not be normal. Their grief is expressed immediately, and they are soon able to reorganize their lives without the deceased. Allowing the child to be very much a part of the family at this time -- and dealing with him honestly -- will allow him to express his emotions and be well on the way to recovery.

Any member of our staff can answer your questions about children and death. Call anytime.

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