

## **Mercy Chapter**

Father Anthony Bellagamba, executive secretary of the U.S. Catholic Mission Council in Washington, D.C., addressed the Sisters of Mercy of the diocese at a General Chapter session May 26 and 27. He is shown with Sister Mary Judith Heberle, superior general. The weekend program centered on the congregation's fourth vow of service and a deepened understanding of mission.

# The Church 1979

By Father Andrew Greeley

#### The Return Of the Irish Drifter

"I've got Irish Catholics falling over one another to get back into the church, said a priest,

friend

mine, reacting

to a recent

column about

the sudden

upsurge of

church at-



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tendance among American Catholics of Irish ethnic background, "Some of them are even offended that we dared to change the church a little while they've been

The priest's comments were fascinating because they provided the flesh for the statistical bones that our analysis had discovered. There were, according to my perceptive young priest friend, many different reasons for the return of the Irish drifters.

"First of all," he said, "they're getting old -- not very old, of course, but at least they've turned 30, maybe even 35, and needed some kind of faith to cope with the fact that they've finally brushed up against their own mortality.

"Catholicism," said my friend, "seems to them as good as any other faith, and indeed better than any of the others that were available.'

They were also concerned about passing some kind of world view on to their children who were beginning to ask what their religion was, as well as their awkward questions about the meaning of life. They were told that their religion was Catholic - that was the only available answer-and the life-meaning questions . . . well, how do you answer those questions? Even if you haven't figured out a world has happened in American view for yourself you've got catholicism in recent years.

to have something to pass on

Many of them had come to realize that they need some kind of religious faith to hold their marraige together, perhaps even to make it grow richer and more satisfying. The Catholicism of their youth didn't seem to have much to say to that issue but, again, some religion was better than none. If Catholicism was not terribly attractive as a church, it was still more attractive than any of the other available options.

Finally, my friend told me, there was a mixture of mellowing and nostalgia in many of those who were stumbling over each other to get back into the church. They were no longer angry at the stupidities and repressions they had encountered from some priests and nuns and perhaps their parents during their youth. On the contrary, they now remembered vividly the attractive priests and the good things about parish life. In fact, they wanted the neighborhood parish of their youth back again so their kids could have the same "advantages" that they had.

"They want the whole bag," said my young friend, "parochial schools, teen clubs, parish discussion groups, benediction, stations of the cross, a priest to take care of their teen-agers for them--and they are outraged to find that, because of the vocation shortage, parish priests can't render all the services they used to . . . of course some of them are offended that we've given up the Latin mass. I tell them it was their fault for not being around when the vote was taken."

The phenomenon of the return of the Irish drifter is too new, too tentative, too astonishing for us to be able to say with any confidence that a major social trend is at work but it is one of the most interesting things that

## Word for Sunday

By Father Albert Shamon

#### Heaven Will Never Be a Bore

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Mt. 28:16-20. (R1) Dt. 4:32-34, 39-40. (R2) Rom. 8:14-17.

The great revelation of the Old Testament is monotheism. "Hear, O Israel, the



revelation of he Testament is Fr. Shamon the Trinity. In this one God there are three Persons: Father, Son, and

Holy Spirit.

Monotheism frightened the pagans. Judaism had little attraction for them with the exception of its lofty morality. This attracted many pagan women. But in general pagans ignored Judaism, for to them a one God was an alone God, and an alone God was a lonely God, and a lonely God was an unhappy God and man was made for happiness.

With the coming of Jesus, the unthinkable thought of God alone like a Buddha contemplating his navel for all eternity was scrapped once and forever with His revelation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- three Persons in the one God.

Plato once asked the question, "If God has a mind whom did he know; if he has a will whom did he love?" The answer is found in the Trinity. God knowing from all eternity generated a concept of God that has all the reality of God, for God can think only a perfect thought. Yet the thought is distinct from the thinker. So God's eternal thought is distinct from Himself. But a distinct divine reality is a divine Person. Since we express our thoughts by words, the Scripture calls God's eternal thought - the Word of God. "In the beginning was the Word. The Word was God." Since the thinker begets his thought, Scripture also calls the Thinker "Father" and the Thought "Son."

But God has will as well as a mind. A love as well as a thought. The Father sees the Son as the perfect image of Himself and so loves Him. The Son sees the Father as the source of all He is and He loves the Father. Into this love both Father and Son pour all their being - the divine reality - for love gives itself, and divine love gives itself totally! But love is something distinct from both the lover and the beloved. So in God there is another distinct divine reality or Person. Scripture calls Him the Spirit of God. For love is not expressed by words, but by sighs. "The lover sighing like a furnace," is how Shakespeare described the lover. And the Latin word for sigh is spiritus. And since God has no body, His love is not carnal but spiritual -- so Holy Spirit.

So the life of God is the life of Three Persons who live by knowing and loving each other for all eternity:

## Bishop Kelly Honored

Consider our lives. Are they not happiest, when we know and love others? Is not a knowledge that ends in the love and possession of another our highest concept of joy? Do we not end our fairy tales with "The prince went off with the princess and they lived happily ever

The Trinity tells us heaven will never be a bore. It is not a glorified church service, plunking harps and singing "Alleluia" - moderns seldom like church services, so heaven holds less attraction for them than a one God for the pagans.

Jesus always likened heaven to a wedding feast. Now who does not like a wedding feast. Heaven is being wedded to three Persons: God the Father who is eternal life, God the Son who is eternal truth and God the Holy Spirit who is eternal love. And isn't that what we all want: life, truth, love? And we will never get it here - for all earthly life ends, all earthly truth is shadowed with mysteries, all earthly love is finite. Our hearts were made for eternity and we have time on our hands. So nothing less than the triune God will satisfy us. The heart is triangular, the earth is round-- it will not fill the corners of the human heart. Only the triune God can. "For thyself Thou hast created us, O God, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee.'

#### MDA Dance

A fund raising dance demonstration for Muscular Dystrophy will be held at Cardinal Mooney on June 9 at 7 p.m. Members of the Debbi Dee Dance Center, 375 Stone Road, will perform for spectators. Tickets are available at the dance center.

Bishop Thomas C. Kelly, OP, another prelate from the Rochester diocese, was honored May 21 by his alma mater. Providence College. He received an honorary doctorate in Sacred Theology.

Bishop Kelly, general secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the United States Catholic Conference, was cited for his "deep commitment to the spiritual ideals of St. Dominic," for his service to the Dominican order, to the Apostolic Delegation, to the Archdiocese of Washington, where he is an auxiliary, and to the bishops' canonical and action agencies.

The bishop is a native of Rochester and a graduate of Ithaca High School.

Others who received honorary degrees at the Island.



**BISHOP KELLY** 

Providence commencement included Arthur Fiedler, Boston Pops conductor; Thomas P. O'Neill Jr., speaker of the House of Representatives, and J. Joseph Garrahy, governor of Rhode

"THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER"



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Set aside to commemorate the anniversary of the adoption of the flag of the United States, Flag Day dates from 1777. A special committee explained that "The stars of the flag represent a new constellation rising in the West. The blue in the field is . . . significant of the coverant of the United States against oppression. The stars are disposed in a circle, symbolizing the perpetuity of the Union, the ring signifying eternity. The thirteen stars show the number of the united colonies and denote subordination of the States of the Union as well equality among themselves. The red, the color which in the Roman days was a symbol of defiance, denotes daring, and the white, purity."

Our flag has become a symbol of freedom the world over -- and on Flag Day, we join with the rest of the nation in honoring it - and those who have died to protect its honor,

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