

Editorials

The Force

Perhaps not since the days when Winston S. Churchill was rallying his island people against the threat from the continent has one man done so much to hearten so many as has Pope John Paul II in his swing through Poland.

While the visit has significance beyond the personal aspect it nonetheless is almost impossible not to focus just on the man - as he clutches a microphone and in a strong baritone leads 300,000 oppressed people in singing "We Want God"; as he then takes the same through through a rendition of folk songs; as he hugs the children who rush to him.

The kind of problems he is presenting to the leaders of Communist lands is obvious. And there are some subtle ones, too. A National Broadcasting Company commentary on the visit made the point that perhaps the keenest cut to the Communist world is that they have no one to counter the tremendous personal impact being generated by this Christian leader.

Joseph Stalin, who once ridiculed the importance of the Vatican by asking how many divisions does the Pope command, would be unhappy to realize that some 20 years after his passage from the scene, a Pope

is indeed heading vast legions and threatening to bring down the walls of oppression.

Yes, this Pope John Paul II is a dilemma for the Communists. They cannot pin the sins of capitalism on him; he has long been critical of the industrial-military system. They cannot say he is an intruder; he is one of their own. They cannot belittle his religion; there are millions of their own who worship with him. They cannot diminish the force of his tour of Poland; the world has already experienced it.

Still to be seen is how they counter his amazingly simple and yet captivating proposal that Eastern Europe turn to Christian leadership as its temporal savior.

Probably not since the Hungarian revolt of 1958 have the leaders behind the Iron Curtain faced such an obvious threat. Motorized vehicles rolled those freedom fighters under while the world looked on. But who today would dare use tanks against the hundreds of thousands who will take up the chant of "We Want God"?

Pope John Paul is appealing to two areas behind the Iron Curtain where the Communists have lost affinity - the hearts and souls of the people. And he has the tactical advantage of reaching another expanse which the Communists have lost by forfeit - the soul of each of the millions who have never forsaken their Creator.

It was Churchill who gave us the phrase "The Iron Curtain." Like the term, the reality has survived for some 30 years. Now, a blazing heat, not generated by physical force or dependent on arms and bombs, has given the world hope of melting it away.

Also in Italy

And John Paul II is not only giving the Communists headaches on their own soil he also is penetrating their venerable back in his adopted land of Italy.

The Communist mayor of Rome has asked the Holy Father to spread his ceremonies over the year because so many pilgrims are coming to Rome for such occasions as the ordination of 26 bishops that the city's traffic and hotel accommodations just can't handle it. It may be a valid point but it also may be a bit of propaganda trying to blame routine problems on the Holy Father. If so, it must be seen as generated by discomfort with this Pope who already has been using extra audiences and shifting hours of his weekly get-togethers with the faithful to serve better the overflow crowds coming to Rome.

We have not read any political analysis as yet on the recent disappointing showing of the Communists in Italy's general elections but could it be that this great Pope is affecting the Italian acceptance of the Communist party?

and Opinions

A Dissent

Editor:

Father Hohman's explanation of original sin as the human condition (C-J, 5-16) is the same as that which is taught to parochial school children of this diocese who must use the Sadlier texts. His acceptance of polygenism - many parents of the human race in different places most often understood to have appeared gradually - is not as universal as he might suppose. "The fact of the matter," he says, "is that we look at the subject of the first 11 chapters of Genesis from a radically different point of view from that of the early centuries of the Church or even the Council of Trent." Father Hohman does not speak with the Popes.

Pope Pius XII specifically warned against polygenism in Humani Generis (1950).

Pope Paul VI deserves special mention. He saw the problem of unfaithful teachers and he faced the problem valiantly. From The Creed of the People of God, Article 4: "In making this profession, we are aware of the disquiet which agitates certain groups of men at the present time with regard to the faith. They do not escape the influence of a world being profoundly changed, in which so many truths are being denied outright or made objects of controversy. We see even Catholics allowing themselves to be seized by a kind of passion for change and novelty. The Church, most assuredly, has always the duty to carry on the effort to study more deeply and to present in a manner ever better adapted to successive generations the unfathomable mysteries of God, rich for all in fruits of salvation. But at the same time the greatest care must be taken, while fulfilling the indispensable duty of research, to do no injury to the truths of Christian doctrine. For that would be to give rise, as is un-

fortunately seen in these days, to disturbance and doubt in many faithful souls."

And soon there follows Article 16:

"We believe that in Adam all have sinned, which means that the original offense committed by him caused human nature, common to all men, to fall to a state in which it bears the consequences of that offense, and which is not the state in which it was at first in our first parents, established as they were in holiness and justice, and in which man knew neither evil nor death. It is human nature so fallen, stripped of the grace that clothed it, injured in its own natural powers and subjected to the dominion of death, that is transmitted to all men, and it is in this sense that every man is born in sin. We therefore hold, with the Council of Trent, that original sin is transmitted with human nature, not by imitation, but by propagation, and that it is thus in each of us as his own." (Emphasis mine).

Thus, inherited original sin as described by Pope Paul VI with the Council of Trent and the concept of original sin as the creeping selfishness of many sets of barely-conscious, childlike ape-men are plainly incompatible.

For a fine study of the problems in catechetics resulting in large measure from the Dutch catechism and the relationship of the Dutch catechism to Pope Paul's Creed of the People of God, read Creed and Catechetics by Msgr. Eugene Kevane with a forward by John Cardinal Wright, published by Christian Classics, Westminster, Md.

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Did Snake Really Talk?

Editor:

Mr. Richard V. Hussar uses an admirably apt metaphor in his recent letter: explaining the truth is often

like trying to explain the colors of the spectrum to a person born blind. Then, in his attack on the orthodoxy of Father Hohman, he switches with dizzying dexterity from the infinitely varied spectrum to rigid black and white. Puzzling. How can a "human-merely-being" think that he or the most brilliant and blessed human being - or two thousand years of them - could hope to circumscribe and define the endless riches of God? How could any human definition set limits on the message of the Spirit or his ability to share it in ways we cannot even yet imagine? In 2,000 years the combined minds and hearts of billions of Christians have not been able to exhaust the endless riches of the scriptures.

This monochromatic approach seems, at least, to want to box the Holy Spirit into communicating in only one mode: the magisterial mode, as if - once the magisterial Church has given an interpretation - the meaning is encapsulated once-for-all, locked in an iron definition which can never be varied, even if the variation is to enrich the definition. I am a loyal son of the magisterial Church, but I do not think that the Church's definitions are intended to put a muzzle on the Holy Spirit. I do not think that the Fathers of the Council of Nicea would have been miffed to know that the Fathers of the Council of Chalcedon would be able to penetrate the Deposit of Faith more deeply than they had been. I do not think that St. Thomas Aquinas (who was not a magisterial voice) would have raged against the more sophisticated tools of scholarship available later to St. Robert Bellarmine. If all the crucial questions were settled once and for all, so long ago, what in the world is the use of training new theologians?

What Mr. Hussar does not seem to understand is that to question the historicity of a segment of the scripture does not necessarily question the truth of the statement. The parable of the Prodigal, for instance, never historically happened. It was a story Jesus made up to embody a

truth. The story of Genesis, too, could well never have historically occurred as it is written; the writer may not have intended to say that a snake actually talked, any more than Aesop intended to say that foxes or hares talked. But the story does tell a truth; about who God is and about who human beings are. Is Mr. Hussar trying to restrict the Holy Spirit to revealing the truth only through literal statements and not through symbolic stories? If so, I'd be fascinated to hear him exegete "The Song of Songs."

But explaining this, too, is like trying to explain the colors of the spectrum to someone who is, sadly, blind.

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Sex Ed Warning

Editor:

We believe that the recent statement opposing sex education in public schools by Archbishop Edward A. McCarthy of Miami is of particular relevance to Rochester area Catholics. Archbishop McCarthy

rightly noted the inherent secular humanism saturating public school sex education programs.

"We must protest," he said, "a system which, by its very presentation stimulates the young to experimentation and is directed to teaching children how they can freely engage in sexual activity safely by avoiding disease in children."

Who can doubt that the pro-contraception and pro-abortion philosophy characterizing the sex education programs in our own area public schools should be of grave concern to all parents?

Surely, more Catholic voices should be raised to inform Catholic parents of the Church's strictures against public school classroom sex education and to advise them against permitting their children to take such courses where indirect and direct advocacy of sexual permissiveness, contraception and abortion often appear in many guises.

Catholic parents should also be aware of the warnings against public school sex education programs found in the recently published National

Catechetical Directory issued by the U.S. Bishops.

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'A Valiant Woman'

Editor:

Cheers for you, Terri Petracca! If what you have written about Planned Parenthood lectures in a Catholic high school is true, you are indeed in Gospel terms "a valiant woman." A folder, "Sex Education in the Schools" by Sean O'Reilly, MD, at only \$4 for 100 covers the story - even showing how Russia now states, "Talks should be held in strict secrecy." Copies from Sun Life, Thaxton, Va., 24174.

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More Opinions To 5

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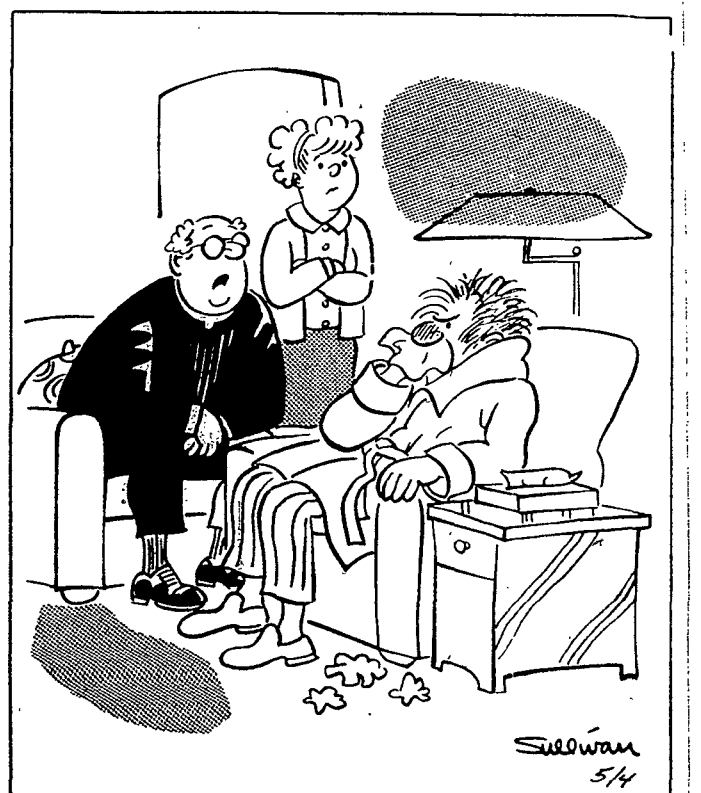
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"CATCHING A ROTTEN COLD FROM SOMEONE DURING THE SIGN OF PEACE IS NO REASON TO LEAVE THE CHURCH, MR. LUMNAGEL."