

The Church 1979

By Father Andrew Greeley

Why Try To Rewrite History?

Francine du Plessix Gray, most of you will not remember, was one of the Berrigan groupies in the 1960s. She wrote the breathless, adoring New Yorker profiles on the dynamic duo, even asserting in one extraordinary purple passage that in the presence of Philip Berrigan she felt like falling on her knees and begging for absolution (about the same time "Father Phil" and "Sister Liz" were breaking their vows with one another without any need for absolution from anyone).

Well, Ms. Gray is older if not wiser and is now a very important literary person around New York. So important, in fact, that The New Republic commissioned her to do a review article on the late Thomas Merton. Ms. Gray informed the readers of The New Republic that Merton's seminar on pacifism energized the Berrigan crusade and that "the rest as social history is ironic: the waning of that 'better dead than red' jingoism which once characterized the American Catholic community and had made it the most politically conservative sector of the nation; and its unexpected spawning of some of the 1960s most radical gestures."

Ms. Gray seems to have learned nothing in the last decade. Her description of American Catholicism is even more fictional than the New Yorker.

The mind boggles at the arrogant simplicism of such an analysis. One almost feels the need to seek absolution for citing empirical evidence against such an august personage as Ms. Gray.

In fact, however, Professor Seymour Martin Lipset demonstrated a quarter of a century ago that Catholics were not disproportionate supporters of Senator Joseph McCarthy. Professor James Wright of the University of Massachusetts demonstrated that Catholics turned against the Vietnam war earlier than the rest of the American population. Professors Sydney Verba and Norman Nie have established that Catholics have been for the last quarter century on the left side of the American political spectrum. Finally, every time the Berrigans or their friends and allies attempted some dramatic protest, support for the Vietnam War went up, not down, as any watcher of the Gallup indicator realized.

So Ms. Gray's historical fiction is inaccurate in every count. Catholics were not McCarthyite conservatives. They did not support the war as enthusiastically as others did. And they were not turned against it by the "creative" protests of the Berrigan crowd.

Why, then, the need of Ms. Gray and others like her to rewrite history?

Do the readers of The New Republic get deceived? Of course they do, but they would much rather be deceived about Catholics than be told the truth. Nobody wants their stereotypes disturbed, especially their fashionable and socially approved stereotypes.

At Your Parish...

Blessed Trinity Opens Sept. 6

Auburn — Blessed Trinity school will open its doors on Sept. 6 for some 475 students. The students will find a completely refurbished school awaiting them, as the repairs of flood damage are nearing completion, according to a Blessed Trinity release.

Blessed Trinity serves three Auburn parishes: Holy Family, St. Alphonsus and Sacred Heart. This year's school board officers were elected recently. They are

Sister Walter Anne, Blessed Trinity principal, as executive officer; F. Michael Stapleton, president; John O'Brien, vice-president and Mary Welch, social secretary.

This year's Home School executive board will consist of Nancy Marquit, president; Mark Lawn, vice-president; Patricia Fallon, recording secretary; Rita Pyndus, corresponding secretary; and Deborah Heintz, treasurer.

p.m.: Cover Girl (1944), first of four musical comedies.

CLOTHESLINE ART— Annual unjuried show outdoors at Memorial Art Gallery, Sept. 8 and 9, 11 a.m.-7 p.m.; rain dates Sept. 15, 16, only if show cancelled both days of previous weekend.

SENIOR CITIZEN MATINEES— Thursdays, 1:30 p.m., at Dryden Theatre, Eastman House, Sept. 6: Casablanca.

INTERNATIONAL FOOD FESTIVAL— St. Agnes Parish event scheduled for Sept. 8, 11-6, on Zion Church lawn.

St. Stanislaus, Rochester

St. Stanislaus Parish on Hudson Avenue will host a pilgrimage to the National Shrine of Our Lady of Czestochowa in Doylestown, Pa. on Sept. 8-9. The pilgrimage will also visit a

Polish Festival featuring polka bands, Polish food, and cultural exhibits.

Those interested in joining the pilgrimage may contact Mary Szlag at 467-1437.

St. Joseph, Rush

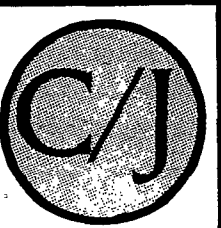
The annual chicken barbecue at St. Joseph's, Rush, is scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 8. Dinner will be served from 4:30 to 8 p.m., and Mass will be celebrated immediately afterward. Chris and Anne Marie Miller have charge.

The yearly fete is the principal social event and fund-raiser at St. Joseph's. It provides tuition aid to young parishioners attending Catholic schools.

Howard Keon, CSB, and Robert F. McNamara.

MARRIAGE EN-COUNTER— Weekends Sept. 7-9, 14-16. Reservations: 716-385-4762.

TOXIC SUBSTANCES— Public meeting sponsored by League of Women Voters-Rochester Metro, 9:30 a.m. Sept. 6, Baptist Temple, Clover Street at Highland. U of R Professor Paul Morrow on airborne hazards; Frank Clark, State Department of Environmental Conservation, on county disposal of toxic wastes. (Child care provided.)



Calendar

CLASSIC FILMS— Rochester Museum series moves from Thursday to Tuesday, beginning Sept. 4; moves also to Eisenhart Auditorium on Museum grounds. Sept. 4, 2 and 8

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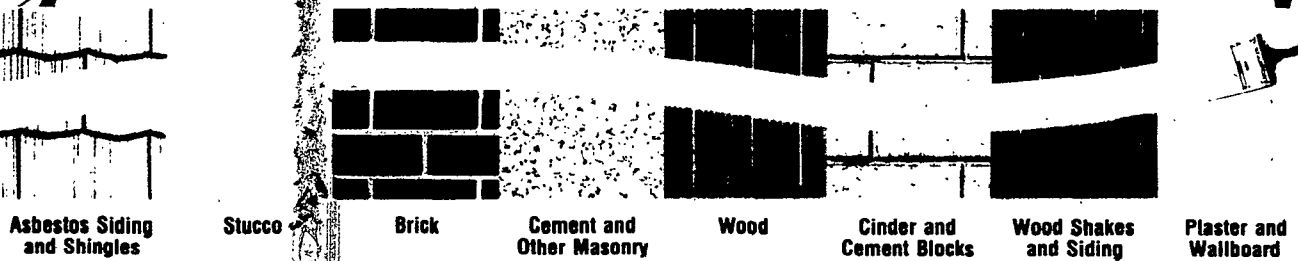
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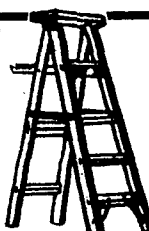
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