

The Open Window

By Father Louis J. Hohman

What Is a Catholic Newspaper?

I'd really like someone to answer this question. Why does a Catholic paper allow some of what the columnists write and sometimes that includes you. People — especially priests shouldn't be Fr. Hohman allowed to criticize the Church in a way which disparages and — I think — goes contrary to her teaching. It is the disrespect which bothers me most. The authority of the Pope and bishops is too sacred to be belittled, especially in a Catholic newspaper.

(Signed) N. D.

Dear N.D.,

The question you ask is one I have wanted to answer for a long time. Some people take the attitude that a Catholic paper should be totally non-controversial, that it should present a particular official or quasi-official point of view and let it go at that. It should be, in their opinion, a kind of text book of official policies and positions. I see the function of a Catholic newspaper as being much more than that. I perceive it as a basic dialogue within the faith community. There are, of course, matters which are agreed upon by all of us simply Christians. There are many other things which happen in the Church which are of human origin and therefore are open to

discussion as long as that discussion is charitable. It is dialogue about these open matters which constitutes much of the thrust of a Catholic newspaper. It is the one opportunity many of us have to speak to one another in a way that everyone can listen. This does not mean that we espouse any particular side or opinion but feel that all of them should be exposed to public view so that the dialogue can continue and problem areas can ultimately be resolved.

We deplore bitterness or assassination of character and will not allow these things in the paper to the extent that we can prevent them. However, that disagreement with some of the human aspects of the Church does not imply disrespect either for the Holy Father or for the bishops. It merely recognizes the humanness of their positions or statements and asks for further dialogue in those matters. I think there is greater disrespect in being indifferent to the problem areas and flaws in the Church than there is in trying to address ourselves to them and resolve them so that the Church can be evermore perfect.

Sometimes we say in theory that we acknowledge the human side of the Church with its possibility for flaw and error but then in practice regard it as totally divine and become appalled when someone reaches out in criticism. To look at the Church triumphantly is to have missed the last 20 years of the Church's history.

It is important that people who discuss these matters have a very clear sense of what is divinely revealed and therefore essential to the Church's teaching and what is humanly established and therefore not essential. This letter is intended to open the door to further discussion and dialogue on this important matter.

Singers Sought

The first rehearsal of the Diocesan Festival Choir has been scheduled from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 21, at the music room of St. Thomas More parish, 2617 East Ave., according to Sister Virginia Hogan, director.

The organization consists of the smaller group which sings at weekend liturgies and the full Diocesan Festival Choir which presents a major sacred concert annually at Eastertime.

Anyone wishing to join the DFC should contact Sister Virginia at 223-9006 before the first rehearsal.

Healing Mass

Father Thomas Schmidt chief of the diocesan Charismatic Renewal liaison team, will celebrate a charismatic healing Mass at St. Lucy's Church in Retsof at 3 p.m., Sunday, Oct. 14.



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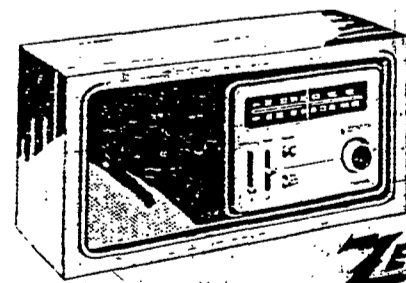


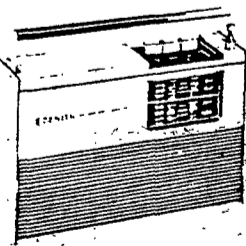
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