

Fr. Paul J. Cuddy



On the Right Side

Letters and Comments

To pilot John Spiesman, Los Gatos, Cal.

"Recently I began to promote a Kempis 'Imitation of Christ.' This brought to memory one day in 1956 at Biggs Air Force Base, El Paso. We had dinner at the mess hall, and with the enthusiasm of a man who had made a great discovery, you said: 'I am reading a great book. It's 'The Imitation of Christ.' My pastor gave it to me for graduation 10 years ago, but I just set it aside and never looked at it. The other day I began reading it, and it's wonderful!' So with this 'Imitation' project, my thoughts turn to you.

"It is a pity to have lost track of nearly everyone I knew at Biggs. But passing time, and neglect in correspondence bring this about. Once in a while

someone from long ago writes or phones. In fact, only last Sunday a friend who was a young pilot with me in Alabama in 1943 phoned me from Oklahoma. I have not seen him since 1944. Unlike yourself, this chap was not strong in the faith then; but he gathered steam as the years rolled on. This should give hope to parents who have wandering children.

"Am sending you some Abp. Sheen cassette tapes as a gift; and hope you have a tape deck, preferably in your car. A special apostolate for me is this: to encourage priests to have a tape deck in their car so they can keep abreast with theology and ecclesial developments. We have little time to read everything. Best greeting to you and Mary, and my love to your two collegiate children."

Comment: Major Spiesman piloted those huge planes for SAC (Strategic Air Command) at our base in El

Paso. I lived with him and with a young lieutenant for my first month there. I had hoped the lieutenant would later study for the priesthood. Instead he married a beautiful blond and had several blond children. Major S, who is now a pilot for Braniff Air Lines in California, was about 28 years old, intelligent, devout, compassionate. He "adopted" a Mexican orphanage for Mexican children in El Paso, who were cared for by smiling, motherly Mexican Sisters, who spoke only Spanish, and who lived in stark, cheerful poverty. What is noteworthy is the fact that the gift of the "Imitation" collected dust for 10 years, and suddenly the seed took root and produced fruit.

From a Snooty Critic, Rochester:

"I read your column each week, and consider you as backward as the Council of Trent.

Reply: "What a superbly stupid assertion! Have you ever read the documents of Trent? They are masterpieces. Have you studied the documents of Vatican II? There are 16, and I have queried hundreds of Catholics. Have you read even one document of Vatican II? Some are even

on parish councils. Not five per cent of these queried have read even one document. Vatican II is the result of the development of the doctrine and practice in the Church which flow from the New Testament onward, and greatly include Trent. I become highly annoyed: observing the disdain, twitch of the nose, and hauteur, with: 'Oh, the Council of Trent!' Why, these do not recognize even the roots of Vatican II. Let me request that you read the splendid document on Ecumenism, which is an affirmation of the Church's past, presented in its developed form in our own zeitgeist. And also read especially the documents on the Church, religious life and liturgy. After you have dug into these seriously, let me take you to lunch, at an inexpensive restaurant. I do not have the vow of poverty, but I am reluctant to spend much on so transient an operation as a luncheon when I can use the extra cash saved to peddle cassette tapes. At luncheon we can discuss whether the Council of Trent should be dropped from the life of the Church, or be recognized as a strong undergirding for Vatican II. If I seem indignant, I am. I hate seeing the Church discredited by those who should be edifying her."

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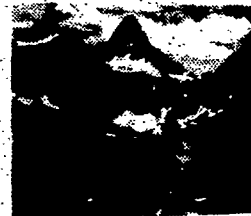
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