

Fr. Paul J. Cuddy



On the Right Side

Religious Precision

You seem obstinate about your admiring the catechism for religious instruction. Some say "obtuse." However, I find in my files a letter to Father Albert Shamon, written when he was Vicar of Religious Education, and the "Come to the Father" text was the salvation of the world. The letter presents well the case for the catechism. It reads:

"Recently I attended a clerical meeting where a nice young priest addressed the group. He said, and this is verbatim: 'In the old days people memorized the catechism, but they didn't know what it meant. This is pure bunkum. I am ancient enough to know the old days better than young priests and sisters who scoff at them. I can speak with some experience.

Were our catechized people Augustines, Aquinases or Rahners? No one claims that. To say our people memorized clear answers to clear questions but did not know what was meant by the answers is a ragged judgment against good fathers, mothers, nuns, brothers, priests: all kinds of good people who were central in our religious formation. What they memorized at 12 they still knew at 42, and comprehended according to their age and capacity. These people learned the answers to the Great Questions: Who is God? Why did God make you? Who is Jesus Christ? What is the Church? What must we do to save our souls? They knew the Beatitudes, the Sacraments, the Commandments, the virtues and capital sins and gifts of the Holy Spirit. They revered the Church and the pope, and usually their priests and nuns.

Catechisms are the fruit of the meditations of the Church. They give religious clarity appreciated by rational man. They give sparkling gems from the Bible. They are epitomes of the Councils. To stuff off these catechism truths as incomprehensible to rational people is an odd twist. Years ago Father Walter Farrell, OP, wrote the magnificent four volumes: "Companion to the Summa." He remarked that within 25 years we would have a great anti-intellectualism within the Church. It has come to pass in much of our catechesis, fortunately being corrected by the Catechetical Directory. That a child of 10 will comprehend deeply the effects of original sin is not likely. But when that child is 40 and has experienced the Pauline conflict between flesh and spirit; this definition which helps him to understand himself, Watergate and all history reads: "The effects of original sin are: a darkening of the intellect, a weakness of the will, and a tendency of man toward evil.

Will my admiration of the catechism be misunderstood? Not by those who

read clearly. If I had the instruction of children, I should use the best methodologies, use the best of catechetical aids, judiciously choose text books faithful to Catholic teaching; and I would be sure that my students would be familiar with the inspiring heroes of the Church, the saints. If doctors must have clear concepts of medicines and surgery; and their effects on the human being, which include his psyche, I think religion teachers have a parallel need to have clear concepts of the Faith. A couple in our parish who taught the 11th grade CCD having tried many texts and methods, told me: "We have found Bishop Whealon's, Living the Catholic Faith Today, the best text for that age group." With a background of catechism conciseness it is even more valuable. The anti-catechism people seem to assume that if we have a clear understanding of the Faith, that we would follow through in the practice of it. This is that anti-intellectualism foretold by Dominican Father Farrell. And hardly kind to those noble people who taught the catechism from the time of Peter Canisius up to the post-Vatican II revolution in catechetics.



Anniversary

Sister Marie Anita Hanley is celebrating the 50th anniversary as a Missionary Servant of the Most Precious Trinity. Sister Hanley spent eight years in parish ministry in Rochester. For three years she was Directress of Novices.

Oktoberfest Mass Slated

Father Winfried M. Kellner will be the principal celebrant of the annual Oktoberfest Mass at Old St. Mary's Church, August 24 at 4 p.m.

The Mass is a traditional part of the City's celebration of Oktoberfest, one of a number of ethnic-oriented downtown promotions.

Father Michael A. Schramel will preach the homily for the event. All the ceremonies will be in German.

Adoration

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will be held at Blessed Sacrament Church Thursday, Aug. 7 beginning at noon. A rosary will be recited at 12:15 p.m.

Benediction will be celebrated at 5 p.m. immediately preceding the 5:20 p.m. Mass. The intention of the devotions is for priests and religious.

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Flap Rises Over CWU Shuffle

New York (RNS) — All 18 national staff positions at Church Women United have been abruptly eliminated in a sweeping reorganization of the ecumenical Christian social service agency.

and CWU President Thelma Adair said the restructuring plan was the product of several months of administrative review and outside appraisal. Mrs. Cox said it was prompted in part by severe financial pressures.

She estimated that the agency faced a deficit of more than \$50,000 from a previous organizational assembly. And a major fund-raising effort, she said, had fallen \$85,000 short of the previous year's contributions.

The changes startled some longtime members of the organization, a major U.S. women's movement, and the move was seen by some as a bid by new CWU General Director Nan Cox to consolidate authority and reshape the agency on her own terms.

Virginia Baron, who lost her post as communications director in the shuffle, said that as soon as word of the move was out "lots of women all over the country were on the phone to stop it."

Staff memos from Mrs. Cox

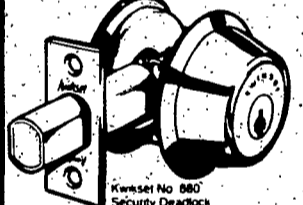
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