

Fr. Louis J. Hohman



The Open Window

Forgiving Educators

Dear Father Hohman,
I'm writing in regard to the letter by P.F. I tore up the first letter because I was taught the same way P.F. was (a reference to her perception of parochial school training as rigid, impersonal and overly strict); though I felt you were right when you said it (that condition) was not widespread, I knew in my heart that it was.

You see, Father, today I can speak up because I am a part of the Body of Christ and God wants to hear from me and everybody else out there. But my training in parochial school is still with me, even at 56 years of age. Some people have fallen away from our beautiful perfect faith because of this training.

I realize today our religion is perfect, but the people in it aren't, and today we can do something about it by admitting our mistakes in not being able to speak about our feelings and emotions in the Catholic schools. I pray you people come back home who have fallen away because of this training.

F.Z.

Dear F.Z.

Your letter contains a most important truth. The

central truth of our faith is the love of God as it has appeared and still lives in Jesus Christ our Lord. He is perfect and therefore the content of our faith is perfect. But the way it is embodied and lived out in human beings (even collectively in what we call the Church) is something less than perfect. And that is OK because we are a people of God on pilgrimage, and not yet arrived at our destination, our fullness of life.

One of the practical conclusions we can arrive at from this is that we cannot expect perfection from our schools or our preachers. Our ability to arrive at faith and remain therein should not depend on the perfection of the instruments God uses. We should not say, "My faith depends on the excellence of homilists, or leaders or school personnel." In the human situation these things will no doubt have more than a little influence on people, but they should not be the ultimate determinants of whether I believe in Jesus Christ and commit my life to him.

We used to have a saying in the seminary that the best proof of the divine foundation of the Church is the fact that it has survived 2,000 years with the kind of leaders it had.



Keynoter

Father Jerome Robinson, OP, former director of the diocesan Office of Black Ministries and now director of the Houston-Galveston OBM, will be the keynote speaker at the second annual banquet of the OBM at 6:30 p.m., Friday, April 15, at the Party House, 677 Beahan Road. Father Robinson headed the OBM here from 1976 to 1979 and later served in Ghana, West Africa, and Chicago before going to Houston in 1981. Tickets are \$15 and may be obtained from the OBM, 328-3210.

Songsters to Entertain

The St. John Fisher College Glee Club annual Spring concert will be given at 8 p.m., Thursday, April 7. The concert is free and open to the public and will include both sacred and secular music. It will be performed in Kearney Auditorium.

Murder of Churchwomen Haunts Administration

By Jim Lackey
NC News Service

Washington — More than two years after their deaths, the case of the four American churchwomen murdered in El Salvador was still playing a prominent role in the debate in Congress over military aid to the Central American nation.

The case received new attention on Capitol Hill when, in the midst of congressional consideration of President Reagan's proposed \$11 million in addition military aid, a Salvadoran appeals court ruled that more evidence is needed before a trial date can be set for five ex-members of the Salvadoran National Guard being held in the case.

Opponents of the president's new aid package said the new delay was proof that the human rights situation in El Salvador delay was proof that the human rights situation in El Salvador is not improving, and a senior State Department official, in a briefing with reporters, admitted that the delay "sure as hell doesn't help" the administration's lobbying effort for the additional aid.

But the aid package cleared its first hurdle March 23 when a Senate subcommittee with veto power over the first \$60 million of the \$110 million request approved it, 7-2. It still faced two more committees.

The Salvadoran appeals court decision said that enough evidence existed to warrant the murder charges against the ex-guardsmen but that the lower court had not presented "important evidence" that could lead to other charges, such as rape and robbery.

"Under Salvadoran law all these charges must be brought

at a single trial," said the judge. "A substantial amount of new evidence is needed before we can go forward."

The five suspects remain under arrest. The four churchwomen murdered in December 1980 were Mary Knoll Sisters Ita Ford and Maura Clark, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and lay volunteer Jean Donovan.

Mercy Educators Will Attend NCEA

Three members of the faculty and administration of Our Lady of Mercy High School will attend the 80th annual National Catholic Educational Convention, April 4-7, in Washington, D.C. Sister Judith Heberle, assistant principal; Sister Diane Marie Erskine, guidance chairperson, and Sister Jacqueline DeMars, math department chairperson, will attend a variety of the 250 sessions on planning, development, and Christian

leadership. Sister Jacqueline, who is coordinating Mercy's upcoming computer literacy program will attend a special computer conference.

The conference, the theme of which is "Catholic Education: The Choices and the Challenges," will feature guest speakers Father Henri J.M. Nouwen, author; Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago; futurist Barbara Marx Hubbard, and ABC News commentator Frank Reynolds.

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Father Bruce Ritter

EVERY DAY IS GOOD FRIDAY

Lent—spiritual death and dying—is hard to live with.

Death and dying are a way of life on the street. Sin is an institution here. Organized sin is literally the

lifestyle of thousands—chosen only by a few, forced on many. Outside our UNDER 21 Centers, every day is Good Friday. Every day, Our Lord's passion and death is reenacted: every day, Pilates and Herods wash their hands; every day, crowds jeer and deride goodness and condemn the innocent; every day, children are scandalized and corrupted; and every day, young people by the thousands are bought and sold.

Those young people, in a way most of us will never comprehend, share in the pain, the abandonment, the loneliness, the utter desolation, the terror that was Jesus' short life and dying. They, more than any, are the poor to whom He longed to preach His good news: the outcasts and nomads with whom He was most at home. They are the very least of His brethren.

A girl said to me: Why do you and your friends run this place? You must be very rich! And I said: "No, I am always broke and we do it because of God and we care about you and love you." And she said: "Can I come to Church and pray with you?"

A boy (a street kid, a hustler) said to me, "Bruce, give me \$10,000, you must be a millionaire to run this place." I just laughed and said I didn't have any money and he asked me where I got it and I said I asked people for it. He laughed and said unbelievably: "What do you say?" I said to him, "Well if you had money and I asked you for some of it to help a bunch of really good kids who had no place to stay.

Father Bruce Ritter, OFM Conv., is the founder and President of Covenant House/UNDER 21, which operates crisis centers for homeless and runaway boys and girls

wouldn't you give it?" And he said, "Yes" and started to cry. I think because it had been a long time since someone had called him good.

"Death and dying are a way of life on the street."

You see the goodness is all around us here, in the beautiful kids who come to us. It's not always easy to love my kids—to see goodness. Our kids at Covenant House are beautiful, but sometimes it takes just a bit of looking for. We have to hope a lot and sometimes overlook the marks that pain and cynicism leave on a child's face.

Our kids are beautiful. They wouldn't like to hear me call them that. They would snort unbelievably and say I was crazy or weird and why did I think that. And that it just wasn't true. It would also mean that I loved them and there is no way they can believe that. No way.

Like Randy, I'll never forget him. He couldn't believe it. He was afraid to. "You want me to give up something for Lent, Bruce?" He said that incredulously, almost with a sense of shock and outrage. "I have a lot of getting to do. I ain't never had anything."

"If He died for us—that was long ago and I don't believe it."

Good Friday was even less incomprehensible: "If He died for us—as you say—that was long ago and I don't believe it. He never did anything like that for me. Nobody did. Nobody does anything just to be good. You guys don't. You're getting something out of it. All your staff does. It makes you feel good to help me. That's your bag, man. Don't lay your trip on me. You need me, man! I don't need Him or you." The boy was 16. A street kid.

To us, who are believers, the world is a different place

because of love and grace. The meaning the death of Jesus imposes on our lives is inescapable. He died for all of us because He loved us though we are not worthy of it and do not deserve it. And ever since that Good Friday, the only allowable reason for us to do good to anyone is out of love for Him. Most especially kids like Randy, still only 16, hurting and crucified.

We are in great need this month. Some new urgently needed staff, some unexpected emergencies, shockingly high fuel and food bills—all kinds of expenses that make it so difficult for you and your families to make ends meet. If you can afford to help us, we would be deeply grateful.

Please pray for us every day. We always pray for you. Beyond any possible way of saying it, we are grateful to you and for you, for loving our kids.

I want to bring the hope of Easter Sunday to children who now know only the pain of Good Friday. Here is my gift of \$_____ please print:
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Father Bruce Ritter
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Because the street is NO PLACE FOR A CHILD