

Fr. John Reedy



Looking for the Lord

Women Religious Have Changed

Behind the sad set of developments which led to the departure of Sister Agnes Mary Mansour from her religious community, there is a background which should be understood.

(Sister Mansour was ordered by Archbishop Edmund Szoka of Detroit to withdraw from the administration of Michigan's Department of Social Services. Instead, she accepted the appointment—with the support of her religious community. Eventually, the Vatican sent an ultimatum: Resign or face proceedings which would probably lead to dismissal from her religious community.)

I regard the outcome as tragic. I think a lot of things should have been done differently. But the damage and the danger go beyond the persons who were involved in this particular dispute.

If the background is not understood and appreciated, we are likely to see a lot more harm done to individuals and to the church.

1. Religious women have been treated very badly by priests, bishops and Vatican officials.

Many of us were inspired by the generosity, dedication and service of the Sisters who served in hospitals, parish schools, social work—and often as very low cost domestic help in church institutions.

Their service was taken for granted. Their opinions, judgments, even their professional training, were not taken seriously by the clerics (and some lay people) who made the decisions for these institutions. The Sisters were patronized in a way which left a heavy residue of resentment and anger under their appearance of meekness and docility.

Much of that anger is still present. With some differences, it is similar to the seething anger voiced by many Black people when the civil rights movement allowed them to express the bitter resentment of their experience.

2. Many communities of Sisters took seriously the church's call to renewal.

Long before communities of religious men (to say nothing of dioceses), religious women plunged into the painful, arduous work of re-examining the roots of their religious commitment.

These efforts led to new insights into the meaning of the vowed life, the sharing of community life, the life of service to those who are in need.

We don't have to assume that all of the decisions were infallibly right. We don't make that assumption about diocesan policies, actions of the

conference of bishops, or most actions of the Vatican.

But we should have the wisdom and understanding to recognize that such decisions, worked out through long, difficult community processes, must be dealt with seriously.

3. Women religious have been deeply influenced by the social revolution identified as the women's movement.

Because of their education, their community support, their distance from family responsibilities and satisfactions, many women religious have become exceptionally sensitive to all those patterns which place limits on human beings because they are women.

At times, this sensitivity might express itself in words and actions which seem excessive, but if the sensitivity is not recognized, some very damaging mistakes can be made.

4. In recent decades, links have been established between the various communities of religious women.

Some of these connections are between communities which wish to preserve more traditional forms of religious life; most are between communities which have developed more progressive, innovative forms of commitment and service.

In either case, an ecclesiastical decision (such as that handed down to Sister Mansour) will have repercussions far beyond the membership of a single community.

Tabasco

Continued from Page 1
 associate pastor at St. Michael's, Lyons; St. Agnes, Avon; St. Mary of the Lake, Watkins Glen, and St. Lawrence, Greece.

Two committees were established to oversee the mission, one in each diocese. The Rochester Tabasco Mission Committee consists of Dr. Evelio Perez-Albuerno, International Justice and Peace Commission, chairman; Sister Janet Korn, RSM; Sister Ann Lafferty, SSJ; Mary Heidkamp, Office of Justice and Peace office; Father Charles Latus, diocesan personnel director, and Father Robert Bradler, diocesan missions director.

Members of the Tabasco committee are Father Jose del Carmen Gomez Canpos, director of social ministry; Father Ruben Ponce de Leon, diocesan secretary, and a representative from CICODET to be named.

Just War

Continued from Page 1
 student was of the opinion that the sacrifice of some lives to save democracy so that others could live in freedom would be a just cause. This led to a debate on how many lives should justly be sacrificed and who and what determines the justification. This brought up proportionality and discrimination.

Proportionality, explained Ms. McCarthy, means whether the good accomplished is in proportion to the destruction. "Is the sacrifice and damage worth it?" she asked, and Vietnam was used as an example of a situation where the good did not outweigh the devastation.

The criterion of discrimination refers to the use of weapons against military personnel as opposed to civilians. The juniors were quick to point to the attack on Pearl Harbor as a discriminatory attack

because it was confined to the military bases whereas the bombing of Hiroshima was non-discriminatory because it devastated a civilian-populated city. But even the discrimination criterion had its detractors. One student argued, "The value on a person's life doesn't change because he's in a uniform."

Other topics touched upon by the students were their sense of alienation from the

decision-making to go to war, the inhumanity of the neutron bomb which leaves buildings standing but destroys people, and the expansionist theory of Communism. The debating could have gone on all day. However, the bell ended the class. Yet, an impact had been made. Each student carried with her to the next class an awareness of the delicate balance between peace and total holocaust.

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Papal Visit

Pope John Paul II greets Father John Gagnier, associate pastor of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Greece, on the occasion of the priest's recent Holy Year pilgrimage to the Holy See. Father Gagnier celebrates this year his fifth anniversary of ordination to the priesthood. During his pilgrimage he celebrated Mass in the pontiff's private chapel, and was subsequently granted a special audience.

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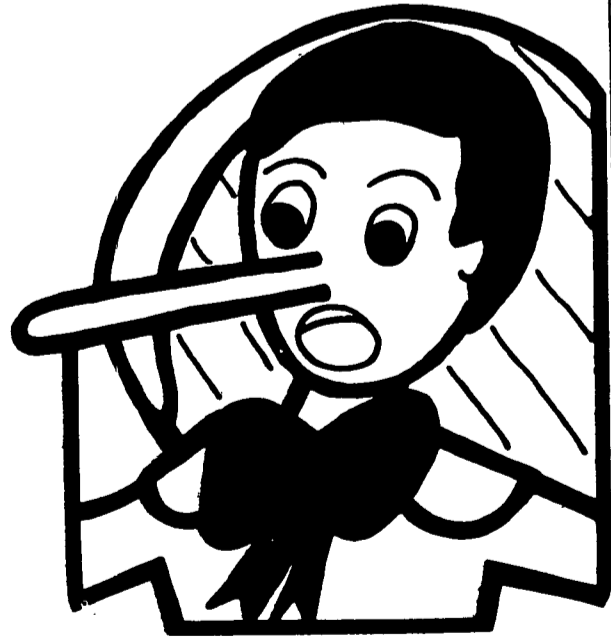
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