

Editorials

Hidden Saints

Pope John Paul II, as he so often does, hit on a new and most proper phrase for all of those people hitherto covered by the cliché "unsung heroes."

He told Catholic journalists meeting in Rome recently that they should tell the story of "hidden saints" as well as "hidden sinners."

While noting the necessity of uncovering secret wrongdoers, the pope added, "I would also hope that contemporary Catholic journalism might seek out the hidden saints -- those humble men and women who teach the young, who care for the sick, who counsel the troubled -- those hidden servants of God who truly live the Gospel." He stated, and correctly, that such people are "newsworthy."

The same thought arose among a gathering watching last week's Academy Awards. The master of ceremonies, Jack Lemmon, welled over with tears in introducing, as a true god, down from Mt. Olympus, fellow actor Sir Laurence Olivier. Now only a fool would downgrade the professional abilities of either Sir Laurence or American Jack.

And the audience, naturally composed of fellow theater folk and their friends, in turn welcomed the veteran actor as a demigod.

Well and good. But in the vein of Pope John Paul's sentiment, let us not forget all the folks who have led and are leading simple and humble lives, rearing families, working selflessly in less glamorous trades, often carrying untold burdens placed by a hardened society. The hidden saints.

Not only journalists but all people should seek them out and honor them. And sometimes that isn't so difficult -- they are often in our own families.

Wait-See

The most unheard thing ever heard of.

That's the fact that high-ranking members of the Curia, the Vatican's ruling body, have agreed to meet with Catholic journalists at a symposium to tell what is going in the highest offices of the church.

Officially, the organizers of the symposium are listed as the International Federation of Catholic

Periodicals and the International Catholic Union of the Press. But it doesn't take more than a modicum of gray matter to put two and two together what with the comparatively recent naming of Archbishop John P. Foley of Philadelphia as president of the Vatican's Social Communications Commission to recognize an American tinge to this Vatican development. To be sure, no one knows what discretion these officials will use in facing the dreaded press representatives of Catholics across the world but if they are at all open it will be tantamount to:

- Coca Cola disclosing its secret formula.
- The Politburo unveiling its world plan.
- Macy's telling Gimbel's.
- Richard Nixon revealing what was on the erased tapes.
- Georgetown's basketball coach John Thompson holding a press banquet.
- Col. Sanders inviting McDonald's to watch him put his chicken together.
- Ford Motors asking Lee Iacocca to study and advise them on their future automobiles.
- Zsa Zsa telling her age.

And add your own. Needless to say, it should be interesting.

and Opinions

General Cure-All?

EDITOR:

It was SRO at the doctor's office. I observed a room crowded with people with every imaginable illness. A short time later, the physician made an announcement, which seemed to me the most innovative proposal in the history of medicine. "Oh my," he exclaimed, "I couldn't possible treat all these people individually, so today I will implement our new process called General Health Care." He proceeded with a series of helpful questions we could use to examine the condition of our bodies. Questions such as: Do you ever have headaches? Do you smoke? Do you experience tension? Are you subject to chest pains?

After that we were all asked to sit and think about the state of our physical being. (Of course, I couldn't sit for I didn't have a chair.) Next we were given a few minutes to tell God privately we were sorry for being sick. Then each one of us was given a small slip of paper on which to write down one symptom or one illness we felt we had been afflicted with. I decided that in prudence I should really write down all my symptoms, so that the doctor would be able to judge accurately the true extent of my illness and make a proper diagnosis.

I was distressed when I found out that the doctor didn't even want to see my list of symptoms! He said he didn't need to know what was wrong with me to heal me. In fact, the little pieces of paper were only supposed to be "symbols" of our illness. Later we were allowed to line up and drop them into a pail placed on a pedestal. This was to symbolize to the community and the attending physician that we were all sick and needed to be cured. As we filed back to our seats, we passed by a nurse who personally handed each one of us an aspirin to take care of whatever ailed us, while the attending physician pronounced us all well. That's all there is to it! No painful shots or blood tests. No embarrassing paper gowns. No going into that little private room where the doctor would poke us or ask revealing personal questions. No dos or don'ts or severe warnings or recommendations. It was all so simple! This General Health Care

program is really great! I could hardly believe it. We were cured! We could go home now with our minds at peace. Only one thing bothered me: How could the doctor really cure me if he didn't actually know what was wrong with me? Oh, well . . . that's the way it is with General Health Care.

The above story, of course, is absurd. Any physician trying to practice that kind of medicine would be considered a quack. We would never entrust our physical well-being to such a system. And yet each time we attend a General Absolution Penance Service, we entrust the care of our most precious souls to an equally preposterous procedure. No wonder our Holy Father warns us not to resort to the use of General Absolution except in truly extraordinary or emergency situations.

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I Want To Live

EDITOR:

You don't know me but I've heard of people like you. I have several names that Mom calls me, like Honey, Darling and sometimes "ouch, stop kicking." I haven't had time to develop my speech, what with having to cope with rapid body changes. Boy, if you think you had it bad as an adolescent you don't want to remember what it does to us little guys. There's the coming out trauma to look forward to (so they tell me). Sorry to dump my problems on you. I know it's no picnic for you either. To get to the point, sir, I want to live. I know there's a big debate going on, whether I'm a person or not, whether I'm a life or not -- I came from Mom's and Dad's bodies -- what do I look like, chopped liver?

Mom and I are the same in a lot of ways. We are both hung up on nicotine and overeating -- but we're different, too. She likes chicken soup and I like mushroom. She likes to sleep when I want to stay awake. I'm kind of my own person.

I know things are getting overcrowded but I don't need much, three square meals a day and a place to call my own, read some poetry, enjoy some sunshine and the company of my brothers and sisters. I hear you guys get

hung up on all the frills, but I like the simple life. We can work it out together if we try.

Besides I hear there's a real push on to make things better for everyone. Boy, would I like to get in on that. Please don't think I'm trying to make a deal but I've been kicking around an idea to help fight water and air pollution. I'm not saying it will work but I'd have a fresh eye on the problem and I'd like to try. Gee, I don't know yet how bright I'll be or what I'll look alike. But Dad likes me and even a dumb puppy helps to bring out caring feelings in us we didn't know we had.

All I'm saying is, give me a chance. If Mom got into trouble and she can't keep me, give me away, I can adapt. If it comes down to my life or hers, Mom and Dad will know what to do. But you guys love to borrow trouble -- sorry, I didn't mean to criticize. I guess we're all human. Look, I don't want you to lose your job over me. You're probably a nice guy or you wouldn't be doing what you do. But get the word out, we guys are in trouble, half the world is running around wondering if we're people or not while the other half is doing a job on us. And how they do it! I wouldn't wish that Hitler, whoever he was. They say he was real bad and killed a lot of people because he couldn't figure out what to do with them.

Dad told me to talk to you guys about this. He says he gets things done through people like you. Please help me. I am scared and I really want to live. I'll try to e good.

Stanley Fleisher
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Liberalism Given Blame

EDITOR:

Even bishops realize the church is in serious trouble with vocations. A conservative religious publication said several months ago that the church needed 10,000 priests and 100,000 unreligious women. The latter are gone and so shortly will be the convents, motherhouses, etc. -- victims of liberal theology.

The church can, although with much less efficiency, get along without religious women -- it can't get along without priests. After the elderly priests now serving

parishes -- what then? Obviously, celibacy will have to go. Whether this will make enough difference is debatable and, the church will never be the same.

The present condition is the natural result of the liberal trend made possible by Vatican II, part of the liberal devastation of discipline which has taken place in and out of the church.

A European churchman said, "The crisis in the church is the crisis of bishops and priest." A Benedictine monk said, "The laity will save the church." I hope so, but I don't believe we can be so lucky. The strong-as-a-rock church of 1950 is now a disintegrating pile of sand.

The situation reminds me of the World War I song, "How can you keep them down on the farm after they've seen Paris?"

John Starkweather
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Bethany House Help Needed

EDITOR:

Bethany House has a special need. We are looking for fulltime and part-time staff for the year beginning in June. Anyone able to help during the summer months is especially needed.

Bethany House is a Catholic Worker house which serves the needs of homeless women and children. Our guests come from experiences of eviction, abuse, imprisonment, illness of mind, spirit, body as well as many other hidden handicaps. The Catholic Worker principles of hospitality, advocacy, voluntary poverty, pacifism, personalism, as well as the spiritual and corporal works of mercy provide a framework for our ministries.

Presently our staff of three women in their thirties who come from varied life and work experiences is seeking the help of another person. A mature individual with a desire to grow in the understanding of the Catholic faith, the Catholic Worker philosophy and is able to meet the changing needs and events of each day through an attitude of Christian flexibility is needed.

We welcome the opportunity to speak with anyone who is interested. Please



contact any of us at 454-4197.

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Consideration Urged

EDITOR:

A few weeks ago it was mentioned in the Courier-Journal that there was to be considered by some sort of diocesan committee the advisability of our diocese participating in the Renew Program of Bishop Peter Gerety of the Newark diocese. The cost was estimated at \$100,000 over a three-year period. This is the same Bishop Gerety who was one of the strongest promoters of the Detroit Call to

Action conference in 1976 and who just recently had to be advised by the Vatican to remove his imprimatur from the unorthodox catechism "Christ Among Us." As recently released information indicates, this catechism presented numerous theological positions that dissent from traditional teachings of the Catholic Church. I would like to suggest that prior to arriving at a decision as to whether this program should be implemented, the members of this committee should be provided with a review of the program which was made by the Green Bay Chapter of Catholics United for the Faith and also a review that was made by one of our outstanding Catholic writers, Richard Cowden Guido.

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Guidelines

The Courier-Journal welcomes your opinions. Letters must bear the writer's signature, full address and telephone number. They should be sent to Opinion, Courier-Journal, 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

Opinions should be brief, typed, double-spaced, no longer than 1 1/2 pages.

We routinely condense letters, edit offensive words and libelous statements, and reserve the right to reject letters. Generally speaking, however, only limited grammatical corrections will be made and the letters will reflect the writer's own style.

Because submitted opinions exceed the space for letters, we publish only original letters addressed to us. We will not use poetry, open letters, or copies of letters sent elsewhere. To ensure diversity, we limit each writer to one letter per month.