

Father Paul J. Cuddy

On the Right Side



A scintillating woman

While on a recent trip to Washington, staying at the Dominican House of Studies directly opposite Catholic University, I spent four hours with a remarkable 25 year old Susan Selner of Denver, Colorado. Her grandparents are George and Mary Ketchum of Clyde, friends of mine since my pastoral days in that Wayne County village, and seven miles east of Lyons where the moving picture "The White Lady" is being filmed, to the delight of the Lyons people.

The Ketchums have seven children, bright and good. In August, 1960 I witnessed the marriage of daughter Joan, who had a nursing degree from the Nazareth College Nursing School, to Dr. Jack Selner of Endicott. He was a graduate of Notre Dame, and had his medical degree from Loyola (Stritch) Medical School, Chicago.

The Selners have five children, also bright and good. I knew that one daughter, Susan, whom I had met briefly in Clyde, was at Catholic University. She is teaching philosophy at C.U. as she continues studies toward her advanced degree. (She has her master's in philosophy.) I phoned her that we might meet and have lunch together and talk while I was in Washington.

I was curious that young Susan should be so involved in a formidable subject like philosophy, so I asked her, "How did you ever get into this?"

She replied, "It goes back to my Denver days. My mother was involved in the Mortimer Adler's Great Books Program. Consequently, I was in it from the sixth grade through high school."

This interested me especially, because for years I had tried without success to get that program into our parish school in Webster. Finally, thanks to a progressive Sister Rosemary St. Peter, S.S.J., when she became our principal, several women took the training course and the program entered Holy Trinity School.

"But," I progressed, "how did you

get into philosophy?"

She explained, "After high school, I went to Notre Dame, intending a medical career. After the first year, I knew that that was not for me, and enrolled in a three-year course: 'Program for Liberal Studies.' It is based on the Great Books program, and is a mind-enlarger. After graduation from Notre Dame, I enrolled in the school of philosophy at Catholic University, and am so satisfied that I am working for a doctorate, and I have a job teaching first philosophers."

I must say that the young woman is impressive — for her intelligent understanding of the Church, for her candor, and also for her delicious sense of humor. Added to that, she has youthful beauty and health.

To those who suspect Catholic University is a bastion of heterodoxy, philosopher Susan Selner can give reassurance of a superlative appreciation of Aquinas in the present day at that university. If our seminarians had people like her teaching seminarians, we would have a pretty good guarantee of faithful priests, steeped in authentic orthodoxy and charity.

I mentioned to her "The Letters of Flannery O'Connor," who used to read Aquinas every day. She had read the book with pleasure and, with me, she was surprised by the morbidity of Flannery's short stories — stories which Thomas Merton so highly praised. I promised to send a fairly recent autobiography of Mortimer Adler, which should interest Catholic intellectuals, especially seminarians, and those who think Thomism is passe. Adler had a chapter which is the most powerful vindication of Aquinas and the perennial philosophy I have ever read.

Two days in the holiness of the Dominican House of Studies, and meeting some fine Catholic University people gave me an appreciation of C.U., which has been so greatly hurt by Father Curran and his controversy with the Holy See.

Father Albert Shamon

A Word for Sunday



All Souls: (R3) John 17:24-26; (R1) Daniel 12:1-3; (R2) Romans 8:31-35, 37-39.

November is poor souls' month.

To pray for the faithful departed goes back to the catacombs. The Feast of All Souls (Nov. 2), however, appeared around the end of the 11th century. Its principal promoter was St. Odo (879-942), second abbot of the monastery of Cluny in Burgundy, France.

Odo decreed that the monks of Cluny "keep with joyous affection the memory of all the faithful departed who have lived from the beginning of the world until the end." This observance spread throughout all of Europe — wherever the influence of Cluny was felt. The date, November 2, was set as early as 1075.

To pray for the dead, says the Scriptures, is "a holy and pious thought" (2 Maccabees 12:45). Holy, because no sacrifice to God is so pleasing as charity.

Both the Council of Florence (1438-45) and Trent (1545-63) defined that purgatory exists and that the souls there can be helped by the Mass, by prayers and good works.

Common sense argues for purgatory. Nothing defiled can enter heaven. Yet many die who are too bad for heaven, yet too good for hell. For these, there has to be an intermediary state or place of purgation. Our blessed Lord implied there was when He said, "...whoever says anything against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come" (Matthew 12:32). The obvious inference is that there are some sins which will be forgiven in the age to come.

Secondly, we can help the poor souls, because of the doctrine of the Communion of Saints. All the saints in heaven, purgatory and on earth are united by bonds stronger than death. This union makes possible a communion or sharing of spiritual gifts. When one's arm is united to one's body, does not the food that goes into the stomach benefit the arm?

So we on earth can pray to the saints in heaven and for the saints in purgatory; and vice versa, those in the world beyond can help us.

The angels ascending and descending on Jacob's ladder symbolized this incessant traffic going on between heaven and earth.

To help the poor souls is a Christian duty. We call them "poor," because they are helpless. For them the night has come when "no man can work" John (9:14).

Many saints have written about the pains of purgatory, and there is no doctrinal error in the works of the saints.

St. Catherine of Genoa in her "Treatise on Purgatory" wrote: "They suffer a torment so extreme that no tongue can describe it, nor intellect conceive it, had God not revealed it" (page 5).

In the life of St. Catherine of Siena, written by her director, Blessed Raymond of Capua, she is quoted as saying: "I also saw the torments of the damned and the souls in purgatory. There are no words that can adequately describe these..." (page 192).

Catherine loved her father, Giacomo, dearly. When he was dying, she asked God to let him go straight to heaven. God at first said this was not possible. Catherine persisted and asked God to inflict the punishment due her father on herself. God consented. The moment Giacomo died, Catherine was tormented by a severe pain in her side that never left her until her death (page 199).

Often the Church has applied to the poor souls the words of holy Job, "Pity me, pity me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has struck me" (19:21).

In the last idyll of the King, "The Passing of Arthur," Alfred Lord Tennyson has the mortally wounded Arthur say to Bedivere, the last knight of the Round Table:

"Pray for my soul. More things are wrong by prayer/ Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice/ Rise like a fountain for me night and day./ For what are men better than sheep or goats/ That nourish a blind life within the brain/ If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer/ ... for ... those who call them friend?"

Yes, we are no better than dumb animals, if, knowing God, we do not pray for our friends — the faithful departed.

Foundation

Continued from Page 12

and we don't want to give away our time with families."

The organization's name has been part of the problem, Hinton suggested. Although its roots are Roman Catholic, the foundation today reaches people of all religious denominations. Its formal-sounding title also conjures up an image that contrasts with the foundation's small staff and personal style.

Nevertheless, Hinton said, the Rural Office has never lacked for clients. More often, its limited resources are stretched. Still, she wishes she could reach those who don't know help is available.

"I know there are people out there we are not reaching, who probably have no idea that there's a way of getting things done," she said. "Those are the people I worry about."

Correction

In last week's article on education tax relief (C-J, Oct. 20: "Bishops kick off campaign supporting education tax relief"), Brother Brian Walsh, diocesan superintendent of schools, was quoted as saying that the average Catholic high school tuition in the diocese was between \$600 and \$800. The actual figure is between \$1,600 and \$1,800.

Prayer service for veterans

The traditional prayer service for veterans and their families is set for November 11 at St. Mary's Church in downtown Rochester at 9 a.m.

Sponsored by the American Legion and the Knights of Columbus, the Mass of Remembrance will be concelebrated by the priest-veterans and chaplains who minister to the military and their families.

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