

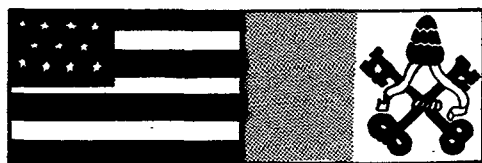
Pointers for priests, seminarians to avoid 'malaise'

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier columnist

Monsignor John Tracy is considered the No. 1 Catholic historian in the United States. For decades he has been professor of history at The Catholic University of America in Washington and has authored many books, including the definitive biography of James Cardinal Gibbons (1834-1921), and a more recent kind of gossip book: *Catholic Bishops of the United States: A memoir*. Our own Father MacNamara of Corning studied under him during a sabbatical in 1981, which he paid for personally. He remarked: "A fine teacher, but a bit of a driver."

Recently I found in *Origins*, an important documentary publication, an address Monsignor Ellis gave to priests and seminarians at St. John's Seminary, Brighton, Mass, and have culled some thought-provoking remarks.

He begins his address: "No period in the



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

Church's almost 2,000 years of life has been spared that sad happening of departures from the priesthood. That the Church has survived infinitely worse conditions should provide Catholics with hope."

After giving a historical background of dreadful periods in Church history, Monsignor Ellis addresses the spiritual malaise that afflicts the Church in the United States today. He gives 10 steps to remedy the current malaise in the priestly ranks. "Malaise" is defined by Malcolm Boyd as a "vague sense of mental or moral ill-being." Less elegantly we might call ma-

laise "the spiritual blahs."

Among the 10 steps offered priests and seminarians are these:

1) Commitment to the offering of or attendance at daily Mass as the indispensable *vade mecum* of every priest and seminarian.

2) Commitment outside Mass to a daily regime of prayer, be that a period of quiet meditation, reading the Divine Office, recitation of the rosary, following the Stations of the Cross, or a combination of one or more of these exercises in a daily Holy Hour. (Comment: This parallels Archbishop Sheen's advocacy of the daily Holy Hour.)

3) Commitment to celibacy for life as the discipline of the Latin Rite, and that conviction to guide and inform one's relationship with women, a relationship if properly conceived can be an enriching influence in the life of a priest or seminarian.

4) Commitment to a simple lifestyle in

the belief that luxurious living and display of affluence in a churchman have probably been the source of greater scandal to the faithful than would be true of his succumbing to the weaknesses of the flesh and the debilitating effects of excessive drink. (Comment: Diocesan priests do not have the vow of poverty. Religious order men — e.g. Jesuits, Franciscans, etc. — do. Even though we diocesan priests do not take the vow of poverty, it would seem our vocation and Gospel preaching should impel us to a certain modesty with the things of the world.)

5) Commitment to enrichment of the mind by reading, not allowing a day to pass that does not add to one's wisdom and knowledge by contact with superior intellects whose thoughts are contained in books and periodicals. (Comment: It has been said: "Do not read good books. Read only the best." I wish some one had guided me in this 50 years ago. When William Bennett was Secretary of Education he published a long list of "best books" which I have mislaid. I had intended to cull out the best and add some of the best Catholic authors like Newman, Belloc, Chesterton, Greene, Waugh, C.C. Martindale, Mortimer Adler, Wm. F. Buckley, Ronald Knox and the like, and will if the list ever shows up. The best Catholic monthly I know is *30 Days*. It's hard wading, but covers in a unique and quite comprehensive way the contemporary universal Church. It is only for serious readers.)

Monsignor Ellis' entire address runs six pages. Anyone wishing a copy of the talk address, may send a self-addressed, stamped, long envelope to me at St. Alphonsus Church, 10 Lewis St., Auburn, NY 13021.

A heavenly leader protects the Israelites from oppressors

By Cindy Bassett
Courier columnist

"King Saul, please come quickly!" the messenger called out to his master in the field.

"What's all of the commotion about?" Saul asked when he saw all the worried people who had come to his farm.

"Our enemies, the Ammonites, do not believe that our new king can protect us from them," one of the people began. "King Nahash has come with his army and surrounded the town of Jabesh."

"The people of Jabesh told him they want only to live in peace," another of the messengers continued. "King Nahash will use this as an opportunity to scoff at us."

"The king has agreed to make a treaty with the people of Jabesh on one condition — that he takes out the right eye of every person there. Such a cruel act will be done to bring shame on all of Israel and on you, King Saul," someone said.

"The people have asked King Nahash to give them seven days to seek help," the first messenger added. "And if no one comes to defeat the Ammonites, they will surrender to him."

Saul had been proclaimed king of Israel just a few weeks before. This was to be the first test of his ruling power.

"Send two messages at once," he said to them, his face set angrily. "The first message goes to every man in our country: 'Prepare to fight!' The second message should be sent to the people of Jabesh. Tell them that tomorrow, before noon, they will be rescued."

Thousands of men responded to King Saul's command to join his army. And when the people of Jabesh received his message, they were overjoyed. They sent a message to King Nahash, saying: "Tomorrow we will surrender to you as our new ruler."

King Saul divided his large army into three forces, and in a surprise attack, the Israelites surrounded the Ammonites and conquered them.

When the rest of the nation of Israel learned of the great victory, they gathered for a celebration to honor King Saul. "We have defeated the Ammonites through God's power," King Saul told them.

Samuel, the prophet, offered a sacrifice in thanksgiving. After the people had again proclaimed Saul as their king, Samuel came forward to address them.

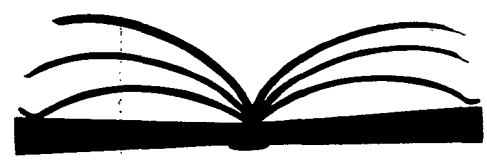
"You have asked God for an earthly king to rule over you, and He has given you King Saul. But you must never forget that it is God who hears your cries for help and rescues you. Even without a king to lead you in battle today, the Lord would have saved you from the Ammonites, for he has chosen you to be his special people

and will never abandon you.

"It was this same God who appointed Moses and Aaron to lead you out of your slavery in Egypt," Samuel reminded them.

"Even so, soon after you arrived here in the Promised Land, you turned away from him to worship the false gods of these foreign nations that surround us. That is why God allowed these people to conquer you.

"With your king to rule you now, you must never forget all that God has done for you. Obey his commandments and serve him with all of your heart. If you do this, you shall prosper. If you choose to sin



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against God, you and your king will be destroyed."

On that day, King Saul and the Israelites made a solemn promise to do all that Samuel had instructed.

Scripture reference: 1 Samuel 11 and 12.

Meditation: "Obey the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. Remember the great things he has done for you." (1 Samuel 12:24)

Survey

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livan), the Southern Tier (Rich Kiley) and the Finger Lakes region (Lee Strong).

A simple comparison of parish notes in the paper's issues of May 1988 — before the regional plan — and those in May, 1989, reveal that the regional coverage has had an effect. In 1988, the balance between Rochester and non-Rochester parish notes was 11 to 4. In 1989, the ratio was reversed, 4 to 10.

In addition, Franz said the survey revealed that the needs of better-educated readers were not being well met by the paper. "One of the things we discovered was that better-educated people were not spending a great deal of time with the paper and did not consider it terribly important to their lives," she said. "The perception is, perhaps, that the newspaper is not challenging enough for some of our subscribers."

With the March 23 issue, the paper began a monthly insight section to help provide more challenging material for subscribers, Franz noted. That section, she said, deals "with spiritual issues in more depth than average news stories can allow." Articles in this section have already examined caring for terminally ill patients, vocations to the priesthood and the popular — but controversial — spiritual novel, *Josshua*.

Lowe said that the results of the survey correlate with the results from two similar studies he has conducted, one for *The Catholic Review*, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, and the other for *The Dialogue*, newspaper of the Diocese of Wilmington, Delaware.

When he began doing research for diocesan newspapers, Lowe — formerly a professor of marketing at Loyola College in Baltimore — said he was somewhat cynical about the publications' importance. But after conducting the surveys, he discovered, "These papers really make a

whole lot of difference in the lives of the people, almost like a fringe benefit of being part of the church. The view that comes across is it's an important media," he said.

With these results in hand, *Courier* management can now go to parishes with objective data about the perceived quality and importance of the newspaper, Lowe said. He noted that the Baltimore paper's circulation has increased approximately 48 percent, due at least in part to the survey information and resulting marketing plan.

In fact, the *Courier* is already initiating efforts to use the study to help increase circulation. On June 14, a letter summarizing the survey results was sent to the pastors of the diocese. In the fall, *Courier* management and staff hope to hold a series of regional meetings with pastors, parish council members and parish staff to discuss the survey results in greater detail. Bishop Hickey noted that support of the pastors is a key to increasing circulation of the paper.

The study will also supply data to help the advertising staff sell ads, Lowe said. Such a survey is necessary, he said, "because advertisers are increasingly sophisticated and they want quality information before they decide to buy advertising."

The survey results will provide prospective advertisers with a clearer picture of the *Courier* audience, Lowe said. This information can be used to help advertisers decide if the paper would meet their needs, and to determine which products should be advertised and how they should be presented in the paper.

The overall purpose of readership surveys is to raise revenues and increase circulation, Lowe acknowledged, noting that the high regard current readers have for the *Catholic Courier* should to achieve these goals. The survey reveals that its readers believe the *Catholic Courier* is doing a good job, he said.

"The key I could see is that it could be doing it for more people," Lowe concluded. "More people should be reading it."

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