

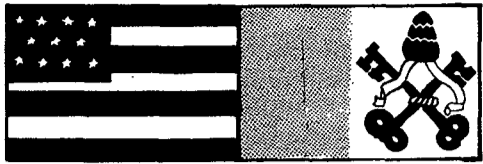
# Wave of radicalism shocked 'folk-religion' adherents

By Father Paul Cuddy  
Courier columnist

When I was in Waverly recently for Father Foy's retirement affair, Elmiran Father Burns gave me a copy of a long review in the New York Review of Books. The book was "Eternal Life" by Hans Kung. The reviewer, Thomas Sheehan.

The review uses the term "folk religion," which I first met in James Hitchcock's "Decline and Fall of Radical Catholicism." "Folk religion" sounds kind of snooty, and when used by men like Sheehan, it usually is. But "folk religion" used by Hitchcock and practiced by most Catholics simply means a contentment with the traditional teachings and practices of the church. It means happiness with paraliturgical and such simple devotions as the rosary, novenas, Forty Hours, Benediction, prayers to the Blessed Mother and other saints. It includes a confidence in the efficacy of the sacraments as well as the sacraments.

Superceding the "folk religion," as some think, we have some impressive theologians and exegetes contradicting one another and the church and each with a popular following.



## ON THE RIGHT SIDE

When the permanent diaconate program began in our diocese a decade or so ago, the curriculum included philosopher Bernard Lonergan, whose works are incomprehensible excepting to a special elite, and Karl Rahner, whose works are not only abstruse but somewhat questionable theologically. I asked some deacons in training: "How are you making out with Lonergan and Rahner?" They smiled and said: "We don't understand much of it, but we are sticking to the catechism we learned in our youth."

Sheehan, in his review of "Eternal Life" asserts: "The dismantling of traditional Roman Catholicism, by Catholics themselves, by now is a fait accompli... In Roman Catholic seminaries, for example, it is common teaching that Jesus did not as-

sert any of the divine or messianic claims the Gospel attributes to him, and that he died without believing he was Christ or Son of God, not to mention the founder of a new religion. These scholars, most of them priests, are ensconced at the heart of their infallible Church."

Father Al Hauser, whose relatives were longtime active Legionaires of Mary at St. Peter and Paul Church, Rochester, is a friend of mine. A graduate from McQuaid High School and LeMoyné College, he joined the Ogdensburg Diocese a dozen years ago, another good man lost to our diocese. He was ordained eight years ago, and served five years as secretary to Bishop Brazana of Ogdensburg. Last year his bishop sent him to the Angelicum in Rome for Scripture studies. So I sent him the review.

He replied: "I found the book review interesting from many angles. It's not so much a book review as an editorial about Sheehan's vision of the Church, and a very misleading one. He gives extremely liberal reading of Catholic biblical exegesis which does no justice to the careful and faithful work done by the exegetes he names."

"He mixes a list of sound exegetes (e.g.

Benoit, Murphy) with very liberal-leaning theologians (e.g. Kung, Schillebeeckx) as if they all represent the radical positions. In fact, when he advances the so-called 'liberal consensus,' he quotes only the liberal theologians, not the exegetes.

"All in all, I think Mr. Sheehan's appraisal of the revolution in the Church is one-sided and perhaps represents a little wishful thinking on his part. I realize there certainly are difficulties in the Church today from unorthodox ideas in teaching and practice. But my vote for which side represents the wave of the future is decidedly with the growing numbers of zealous and committed young priests and seminarians like many I have met in Rome."

Let me conclude by noting that the young men Father Hauser mentions are like some I have met recently in our own diocese. The wave of radicalism which seized young priests two decades ago, who exulted in cutsies and in shocking devout "folk-religion" parishioners seems to have largely subsided, and reverence for the Church's teachings and devotions to have taken hold. There are a few troublous ones, but the future looks better. Deo gratias.

# Martha, Mary exemplify two sides of God's work

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Luke 10:38-42; (R1) Genesis 18:1-10; (R2) Colossians 1:24-28.

Last Sunday's Gospel was about the Good Samaritan, about being neighborly. This Sunday's first reading and the Gospel both exemplify neighborliness. Abraham welcomes guests; Mary and Martha welcome Jesus and His companions. In both instances, they were welcoming God. Always, God is in the hungry and needy. In serving them, we serve Him.

A priest had a housekeeper whose name was Martha. Every time she heard this Gospel, she'd say, "Indeed, Martha, Martha! Who would do the housecleaning, the cooking, the laundry around here if we Marthas didn't do it? Nothing would get done if I just sat around and thought and talked about holy things."

She had a point. Hosts of people would like to sit at the feet of Jesus, to pray more, attend weekday Mass oftener, read the Bible and the Catholic paper, but they don't have time. What can they do? Well, they can combine the roles of Martha and Mary. All work and no pray makes for a very dull and wasted life.

Mary and Martha lived in Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. Luke is concerned about our Lord's treatment of women. It is remarkable for first-century Palestinian Judaism that a woman would assume the posture of a disciple and sit at the Master's feet. The disciples were amazed that Jesus talked to a Samaritan woman in public at the well of Jacob (John

4:27). Luke reveals the characteristic attitude of Jesus toward women in his Gospel. He exalted them.

Mary and Martha reveal the two ways one can serve God. Martha wanted to give; Mary wanted to receive. Some see in Martha the active life; and in Mary, the contemplative life. Both are needed in the Church.

Once a man had come home from a rough day at the office and was trying to read the paper. His children constantly interrupted him. One child came and asked for money for an ice cream cone. Graciously, the father gave him a coin. Another child came in tears. Her leg was hurt and she wanted daddy to kiss the hurt away. An older son came with an algebra problem, and they eventually got the right answer. Finally, the last and youngest of them all burst into the room looking for good old dad. Almost annoyed, the father said, "What do you want?" The little youngster said, "Daddy, I don't want anything. I just want to sit on your lap." Like

Mary, he had chosen the better part.

Martha, if you notice, didn't go to her sister and say, "Mary you ought to help me." No, she went to Jesus and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me all alone to do the serving?" She expected Him to take her side. He didn't. Instead, He said, "Don't be making such a fuss. One dish is enough."

Thomas J. Green, SJ, once a student of mine at Aquinas, has written some very splendid books on the life of prayer. One is *Darkness in the Marketplace*. St. John of the Cross' classic works *The Dark Night of the Senses* and *The Dark Night of the Soul* deal with the purification of contemplatives, the Marys. But Father Green's book is the counterpart to these describing the purifying activity of God in the soul of the Marthas, those engaged in the active life in the world, which encompasses most of us.

Martha's rebuke from Jesus was her



## A WORD FOR SUNDAY

dark night. She needed that as do we all. Do we get so caught up in our work that we have no time for God? Are we working for God or are we doing God's work? A mother, like Martha, might get no thanks for serving. Like Martha, she must not quit; but learn to do all for the love of God.

St. Ignatius prayed:

"Lord, Teach me to serve you as you deserve.

To give to you and not to count the cost.

To fight for you and not to mind the wounds;

To toil and not seek for rest;

To labor but to ask for no reward,

Except the knowledge that I do it for you, O Lord!"



Cliff Hollenbaugh

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