

Reader response proves pamphlet's timeless appeal

By Father Paul Cuddy
Courier Columnist

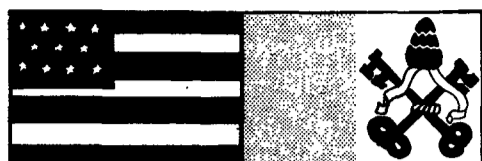
In September, this column dealt with why some Catholics just drop out of the church into non-practice, or even leave it for one of the many sects.

As a help to upset parents, the column suggested that they get the 24-page pamphlet, *Acceptance*. The periodical has helped many disturbed people.

Few articles have brought a greater reaction. Here are some samples from outside of the diocese:

"My mother-in-law recently gave me some articles written by Bishop (Matthew H.) Clark, which were published in the *Courier*. On the flip side of one was your article dealing with children leaving the church. This hit home for me," the letter stated.

"I have five children who were raised 'by the book.' My husband and I both went to parochial schools, and we faithfully attended Mass with our five every Sunday.



ON THE RIGHT SIDE

Now the children are adults, in their 20s and 30s. Two do not attend Mass or receive the Sacraments. The other three are 'hit or miss' Catholics. Heartbreaking! Attempts to discuss the subject usually bring angry reactions," the letter stated. "Maybe there will be some solace in the booklet, *Acceptance*. Please send me a copy. I've enclosed my dollar and a self-addressed envelope."

The letter concluded, "I guess there is some comfort in knowing our family is not the only one going through this anguish. Good article, Father!"

Comment: There is some comfort in

knowing that we are not alone in desolation. When children become adults, there is little profit in argumentation. Parents cannot walk in the shoes of their children. Just pray for them. Love them. Be patient. And hope for the future.

From the Albany diocese: "I was pleased" to receive your recent note, but must confess a little confused by it. Last month I sent a dollar and a self-addressed envelope along with the request I be mailed the booklet, *Acceptance*. Instead I received a copy of an article entitled, 'The Benneyfits of Sunday School.'"

The note continued, "Enclosed is another dollar. Let's try again. If the booklet eases my mind to some degree over the fact that my children no longer practice their faith, it will be well worth the investment."

Comment: Since I belong to the school of "Get the most out of your investment," when I send a letter or a booklet, I usually include some pertinent or entertaining arti-

cle with it. The mailing cost is the same. Evidently I overlooked the booklet (you ordered). To compensate, I added Father Collins' *Me, Myself and You*, a development of *Acceptance* as a bonus. God has His own ways.

From a Rochesterian: "I am enclosing one dollar for the pamphlet, *Acceptance*. I hope you still have one. Your column in the *Courier* I always read. Don't change."

Comment: My last order to Abbey Press, St. Meinrad, Ind., was for 1,000 copies. When I phoned the order, the woman at the Abbey Office said they were up to 4,500,000 printing. "It's about the only thing that we have to constantly keep reproducing," she said.

While filling in at Moravia and Scipio Center October 7-8, 230 copies were bought, plus a few of *Me, Myself and You*. The encouragement, "Don't change" is a bit different from the anonymous letter which concluded, "Get with it. Don't you know we've had Vatican II?"

Humility lends wings of effectiveness to prayer

By Father Albert Shamon
Courier Columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Luke 18:9-14; (R1) Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18; (R2) 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18.

Last Sunday's readings taught two qualities of prayer: persistence and confidence. This Sunday's readings give the third quality: humility.

Our Lord illustrated this quality by the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Both men went up to the temple to pray, probably at one of the usual hours, 9 a.m. or 3 p.m.

Apparently, the Pharisee went up to the very front of the temple court. In contrast, we are told the tax collector "kept his distance," and stayed in the back.

The Pharisee went to the front to be seen by all. He prayed with head unbowed, so cocksure was he of his status before God. He prayed, "I give thanks ... I'm not like the rest of men or that tax collector, grasping, crooked, adulterous."

How judgmental he was! He thanks God for what he is not! So many define religion in such negative terms. "I'm a good Catholic. I don't cheat. I don't steal. I don't commit adultery. I don't hurt anyone."

Voltaire said of Mazarin, who was one of the ministers of Louis XIV, "This man was guilty of all the good he did not do."

A teacher once described to his class one who did not do this and did not do that and did not do the other thing. When he fin-

ished, he asked the class if they thought the person he had described was a Christian.

The students agreed such a person had most of the characteristics. The teacher said, "I have just been describing my dog."

Then the Pharisee went on, "I fast ... I tithe ..."

Augustine asked, "Did he go up to pray or to praise himself?"

Richard Crashaw wrote this in the 17th century: "Two went to pray? O, rather say, One went to brag, the other to pray; One stands up close and treads on high, Where the other dares not lend his eye; One nearer to God's altar trod, The other to the altar's God."

The tax collector, conscious of his nothingness, "kept his distance." Sin hung so heavy on him, he did not dare raise his eyes to heaven. Rather, he beat his breast, the seat from which evil springs, and said, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner."

A priest in the missions in the South Seas read this parable to his people. A poor native listened. "Two men went to the temple to pray."

"Ah," thought the native, "now I'll learn how to pray."

One prayed, "I thank God I'm not like the rest of men."

"That's true of me," reasoned the native. "I'm worse."

"I fast ... I tithe..."

"I don't do that," the native thought in

distress. "I don't pray like that. What'll I do?"

The priest read on to the tax collector who kept his distance.

"That's where I am," the native said to himself. "Far from God."

The tax collector beat his breast and said, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner."

"That's me!" the native concluded. "That's my prayer."

So he beat his breast and said, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner," and went home happy.

Why happy? Because God hears the prayers of the weak, the devout, the lowly (R1). Humility, the sense of dependence on God, gives wings to prayer and makes it effective.

"The prayer of the lowly pierces the clouds; it does not rest till it reaches the heavens."



A WORD FOR SUNDAY

Two brothers, Eddie and Jamie, got into a quarrel. Jamie was sent to his room for starting the fight. After a while, his mother called him and asked what he had been doing.

"Praying," Jamie answered. "And just what were you praying for?" his mother asked.

"That God will pardon Eddie and make him a better boy."

A prayer we all might pray is, "O God help me to see myself as you see me."

St. Augustine prayed that way. "O God," he used to say, "give me the grace to know myself that I may despise myself, and the grace to know Thee that I might love Thee."

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