

# Monasticism has role in transforming world

"The desire for God is apparent everywhere in so many different forms in our post-modern world, even if it is uninterpreted and therefore unrecognized," Carmelite Sister Constance FitzGerald asserted Aug. 15 during the Baltimore symposium "Carmel 200: Contemplation and the Rediscovery of the American Soul."

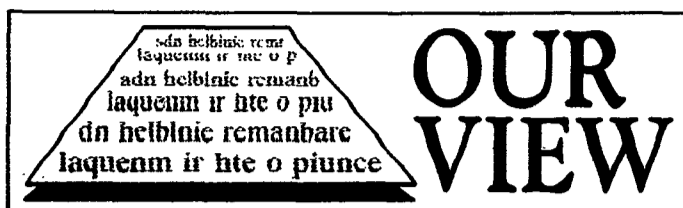
In her keynote address, Sister FitzGerald said the evidence that "we have lost our humanity is all around us in organized terror, torture, oppression of the poor and political murder, in hunger, starvation, homelessness, poverty."

Noting also such positive world events as the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, Sister FitzGerald said all of these signs of death and of new life indicate it is time to "mark our era with the stamp of contemplation."

The long-term result of contemplation, she said, can be the "transformation of not only social and economic structures," but also the fulfillment of God's wishes for humanity and the universe.

How can contemplation bring about such wonders?

As Father M. Basil Pennington, OCSO, pointed out in his booklet *Monastic Life: A Short History of Monasticism and Its Spirit*: "In the course of history, individual monks and nuns have played dramatic roles as peacemakers. Since the days when the Desert Fathers sent boatloads of grain down the Nile to Alexandria's starving poor, they have dramatically or quietly responded to the social needs around them. But always, they have prayed in the day and in the night. The power and significance of that intercession some have denied or questioned, but the Church has always affirmed it, inspired by the example and word



of her Founder, who spent his nights in prayer and said: 'Ask, and you shall receive.'"

Indeed, Pope Paul VI stated in the decree *Perfectae Caritatis* that contemplative orders "will always have an honored place in the mystical body of Christ... For they offer to God an exceptional sacrifice of praise, they lend luster to God's people with abundant fruits of holiness, they sway them by their example and they enlarge the church by their hidden apostolic fruitfulness."

Father Pennington likened one aspect of monasticism's fruitfulness to the leaven that makes the whole loaf rise. "The solidarity of the human family, of the one Christ, is such that whenever one member rises to a new level of consciousness, he or she lifts up all others," he wrote.

Through their pursuit of *contemplatio* — "the luminous and captivating presence of God" — he explained, those dedicated to monastic life "find themselves creating an ever-greater solidarity with all their brothers and sisters everywhere, thus becoming a powerful force for the peace and well-being of the human family in our time."

Part of that solidarity is produced by the hospitality cloisters have offered to the people of God throughout much of monasticism's history. Despite or perhaps because of their own need for seclusion, con-

templatives cautiously open the doors of their monasteries — from Rochester to Piffard, from Elmira to Big Flats, and around the globe — for liturgies, retreats, community days and other experiences that enable lay people to leave the world behind if for only a few hours.

The value of that contribution alone should not be overlooked. For, as Father Pennington remarked, "In an increasingly frenetic secular environment, the need to be able to enter into contemplative prayer and find one's own center in the ground of being who is our God, has become more and more urgent; in the experience of many, it is essential to preserving one's own true humanity."

— The Editors



## Abortion opponents are heroes; media biased on issue

To the editors:

I would like to comment on the articles regarding the pro-life people.

I have been a member of the National Right to Life Committee for the past 17 years. I sincerely believe all these are good articles and thanks be to God for people like Father Mugavero, Joan Anderson and Terry Randall. These are the people who do not tear down abortuaries, but instead place their bodies between the babies and the pro-abortionists. They are willing to go to jail to save the babies knowing all the while they themselves are innocent.

On June 30, I attended a closed-circuit TV "Unity 90" Conference which was the feast day of the Holy Martyrs of Rome, and it was brought out at the conference the Hispanic people are going to save the church because they have the lowest percent of abortions of any nationality.

Most would live in dire poverty before they would think of having an abortion. To think it had to be closed-circuit TV because we know the TV media and papers would not give us pro-life people equal coverage as they do the pro-abortion people, but since "Unity 90" they seemed to be doing a little better. Isn't it amazing that they (reporters) finally admitted their bosses told them not to use the word pro-life? Yet

that is exactly what we are, pro-life. When the Holy Father was here in America he told us the Hispanic people will save the church and somehow I believe that Bishop Clark believes it too, only through the work of the Holy Spirit.

When *Roe vs. Wade* went on the books in 1973, and killing of the babies was made legal, another evil immediately followed outside the womb. It was the unleashing of child abuse in this country. Figure it out for yourselves. We never heard anything like it until then. The highest court in the land had made abortion legal. Evil can only triumph when good people do nothing, so everyday the babies have to die because of this nation's silence. Abortion was never a religious issue, it was always a moral issue. Christ endowed every person on the face of the earth. It is the church who always comes to the aid of the defenseless just because others will not stand up for the oppressed.

I understand that Hungary was the first country to legalize abortion and today she has reversed it because so many of her women are diseased. What communism did throughout the whole world. I wish to thank all the pro-life people whom I met that night at the cathedral and especially Father Firpo and Kathy Machi for their

courage not to be afraid of a law which is so unjust because we pro-life people know God's law is higher. How can anyone be healed of any wrong until he or she finally confesses it and then the healing process can begin.

Sister Faustina tells us of Jesus' Infinite Mercy and Mother Theresa calls abortion the greatest destruction of peace. I forgive all who have ever had an abortion or who assisted in an abortion. We have an all-

forgiving Father who is waiting for us to come to Him with all our offenses and burdens.

P.S. Does the idea ever occur to someone if Judge Souter was pro-life the media would be screaming bloody murder, but the media is so quiet on this man.

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## Faithful need frequent confession

To the editors:

Regarding your August 2, 1990, article: "Bless me, Father," I am one of those who claim that there has been a great loss of the sense of sin and that there are abuses of general absolution. Your author says that, "these statements are not true — at least not according to the results of two recent studies."

In my booklet, "A Contemporary Adult Guide to Conscience for the Sacrament of Confession," I based my thesis, not on my opinions, but in fidelity to the 1983 Synod of Bishops and the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, *Reconciliatio Et*

### Pictures add 'touch'

To the editors:

The subject of running the pictures of writers of columns with their articles seems to have passed away without a whimper. That may be so but I am sure there are some like myself who feel bad that we couldn't prevail upon you.

As my final word I'd like to make an observation. Unlike a newspaper catering to the general public, a Catholic periodical has a more select and perhaps limited following often affiliating with writers with whom we identify. Because of their loyalty there is a strong bond uniting us (writer and reader). Therefore it would be so satisfying to have the pictures to add the personal touch.

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*Paenitentia*. In #18, the Holy Father reaffirms the admonition of Pope Pius XII who "one day declared, in words that have become almost proverbial," that "the sin of the century is the loss of the sense of sin." See # 16 where the Pope refutes errors about social sin and personal sin.

It is curious how some can self-righteously mislead God's people on the strength of public opinion polls and yet fail to take into account magisterial teachings. Based on these studies, it is affirmed that general absolution is infrequently used. Need I say that to disprove this totally all one has to do is to look anywhere in your own area? As to the observation that Vatican II mandated a different understanding of sin — the claim is too absurd to refute.

I know of no magisterial statement, no saint, no spiritual writer, faithful to the Teaching Church and the lives of the saints, who would not encourage frequent confession. Yes, due to misunderstanding, some may make "rote confessions." But this does not discredit the constant pious practice of the church which recognizes that the means to grow in grace before God and men is frequent and humble use of the Sacraments of Penance and Communion. The biggest need of our day is to get on our knees before the priest of Jesus Christ and say, "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned."

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