

COLUMNISTS

Spirituality keeps us down-to-earth

During Lent we strive to focus on the spiritual side of our lives. Nobody ever thinks they have done enough to get their souls in order, so any opportunity to direct our attention toward God, our souls or religion can look pretty good. It also relieves us of some of the guilt we store up because of a tendency to avoid what needs to be done in this area while we focus on more immediate needs and demands.

In a sense, though, some of the great spiritual geniuses have understood that genuine Christian attention on the spiritual, on our souls, on the eternal goods we ultimately seek, actually leads us right back to our ordinary, everyday concerns.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran martyr, has written much about this. In one marvelous passage he says: "If you would find eternity, give yourself to time. This seems like a tremendous paradox: if you desire the eternal give yourself to the temporal. If you desire God, hold fast to the world." He understood that religious people often seek to flee from reality and the demands of life in order to construct a piety for themselves that is ultimately too individualistic, too other-worldly, too divorced from the world in which God acts and encounters us.

For Bonhoeffer, this tendency toward "other-worldly piety" needs to be rejected



the
moral
life

BY PATRICIA SCHOELLES, SSJ

because it results in a pseudo-religious flight from the world. His ideal church was envisioned as a "congregation of children of earth who refuse to separate themselves from the world — the suffering and battling congregation in the world on behalf of the human race, asking God to manifest his glory in it."

Bonhoeffer understood that concern for the social well-being of others is essential to the spiritual journey, and to the essence of the church's mission for universal salvation.

Other sources of spiritual wisdom also express this insight. The Second Vatican Council urges us to focus our "attention on the world of men and women, with the sum of those realities in the midst of which that human family lives. It gazes upon the world which is the theater of human his-

tory, and carries the marks of our energies, our tragedies, our triumphs: that world which the Christian sees as created and sustained by its Maker's love, fallen indeed into the bondage of sin, yet emancipated now by Christ." (Church in the Modern World, 2)

The rejection of a spirituality that is too exclusively other-worldly and individualistic needs to be complemented by a rejection of the opposite extreme, too, however: a type of world-involvement that is too exclusively secular. Bonhoeffer rejected this "this-worldly secularism" that fails to recognize God's sovereignty over all that is, and fails to be constantly aware of God's saving activity in all of human history. Sometimes those who work on behalf of humane progress in business, government and education forget the "God dimension" of all that is. This forgetfulness can lead to an uncritical complacency that fails to acknowledge God's lordship over the secular and God's action in our souls through our involvement in these matters.

Awareness of God's presence and activity as we move through our days as we spend our energies on good causes allows us to make important connections and to bring this perspective to our efforts and work. Moreover, it is the God dimension that can bring essential direction to our ef-

forts and help us move things in a more Gospel-directed way.

Christians who seek greater spiritual awareness, then, need to remain close to the world and to act almost as ambassadors of God and God's interests as they work for more humane arrangements in secular matters. This can sometimes lead individual Christians and their churches to become critics of proposals offered by secular institutions, when these proposals appear to go against what is genuinely human and helpful for our communities and our genuine relationships. I think immediately of the Roman Catholic Community of the 19th Ward responding not too long ago to a West-avenue trash collection proposal, or the actions of various churches in response to the juice bar controversy in the Mt. Read neighborhood.

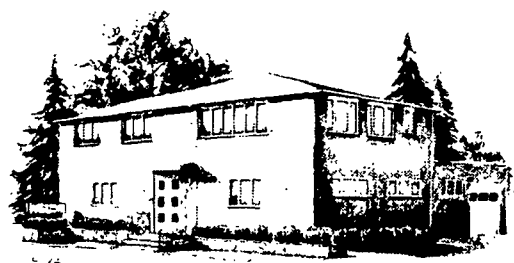
As we move through Lent and try to become more centered and more genuinely spiritual people, we should not ignore the fact that the God we are seeking "became flesh" and dwells among us. We will not find God without recognizing that what God is doing among us requires our participation in the creating a better, more human society for all.

...

Sister Schoelles is president of St. Bernard's Institute.

Michael R. Yackiw Funeral Home

1270 Norton Street
544-5000



Kids' Answers from page 12

1. God 2. Eleven 3. Neither 4. Tabitha
5. Into 6. Lydda 7. Ethiopian

We're 90% leased. Call us today!

"We fell in love with the peace of mind."



"Taking care of a house became more trouble than it was worth for my wife and me, so we started looking into various retirement options and decided Chapel Oaks was the ideal place to go. The staff is so attentive to our every desire. We recently went to Grand Cayman and when we came back, our apartment was safe, secure and immaculately clean.

Now that's service!"

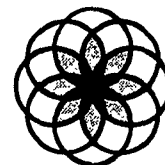
— John and Betty Fulton
Rochester, New York

The French call it *joie de vivre*, or love of life. That ability to approach life joyfully and fully appreciate all that each day has to offer. Every day, residents of Chapel Oaks, Rochester's newest and finest rental retirement community, are finding the joy of retirement living. Once you've experienced life at Chapel Oaks, you may find yourself falling in love with the true joy of living all over again.

Fall in love with the *tradition* of St. Ann's of Greater Rochester, Inc., who for 125 years has provided senior adults with a truly fulfilling retirement lifestyle. The *location* of being perfectly situated on 14 beautiful, secluded acres of the St. Ann's campus and just minutes away from Rochester's finest shopping, entertainment and cultural activities. The *independence* to continue an active life style without routine maintenance and tiresome daily chores. The *value* of a rental concept with no entrance fee, which makes Chapel Oaks Rochester's most affordable retirement living options. The *convenience* of exceptional services and amenities, and the spacious one- and two-bedroom

apartment homes. Or, fall in love with the *security and peace of mind* that comes from having priority access to a full continuum of health care services right on the St. Ann's campus.

Retirement is your time to seize the day and life to its fullest; to experience your "joie de vivre." Please call (716) 342-3052 for more information about Chapel Oaks or to arrange your personal tour. Once you see all that we have to offer, you may just find yourself falling in love with the true joy of living all over again!



ST. ANN'S
CHAPEL OAKS
Full of Life.

1550 Portland Avenue Rochester, NY 14621
(716) 342-3052

An affiliate of St. Ann's of Greater Rochester, Inc.

