

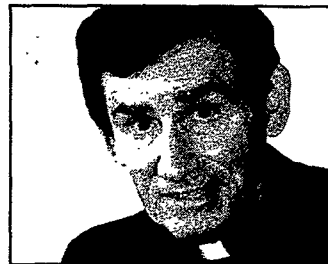
History's lessons valuable amid concerns over safety

When I spotted the new guardhouse in the driveway of the Library of Congress, I said to myself: "What is this world coming to? We already have barriers almost everywhere you walk on Capitol Hill. Will we ever see the day when all this stops?"

As I pondered the scene further, I became even more troubled. I thought: "Not only is the Library of Congress one of the most distinguished libraries in the world, but it is a national symbol for learning and progress. Now it is surrounded by barricades and an additional guardhouse, which are symbols of regression and the very opposite of progress."

What disturbs me even more is the talk of building all of Washington's visitors' centers underground. No doubt this plan has architectural and efficiency advantages. With growing numbers of tourists coming to Washington, these underground centers afford protection from the elements while they await their turn to view the capital's monuments. But with all the talk of bombings and terrorism, building underground entrances and erecting barricades also signals that we fear for our safety and are being forced either to build walls around ourselves or go underground.

As I continued to reflect, however, it occurred to me



Father Eugene Hemrick

Making a difference

that building walls and going underground has been part of human history from its beginning.

During the days of the prophets, Jerusalem often feared for its safety. When, for example, King Hezekiah was about to be besieged by the Assyrians, he realized that even though Jerusalem was surrounded by protective walls, its water supply came from outside those walls. If the Assyrians cut off that supply, Jerusalem would fall quickly. This prompted him to build the tunnel of Hezekiah, an underground passage that carried water from the Virgin's Fountain just outside the walls of Jerusalem.

Throughout the Old Testament, it was common for cities to be surrounded by walls. Take for example the Walls of Jericho that were brought down by the Israelites.

In medieval times, moats around castles were common. And in recent times we have seen the erection of

bunkers and the use of caves whenever there is war.

Unfortunately, the day will never come when we will see all of this disappear once and for all. Why say this? Because barricades, walls and underground hiding places symbolize the battle between the world of darkness and the world of light. Whenever battles are fought, people take cover.

How might we cope with this somewhat disturbing thought?

I suggest that we internalize history's lessons. One of those lessons, which many of us don't like to think about, is that many things never change. As much as we strive for peace, we don't ever see it pervading the world to the point that enemies no longer exist.

History teaches us that as long as we live, we will always have times when we need to seek cover. Recognizing this may help us to accept certain facts of life. As a result, some of our anxieties may be soothed a bit. And our anger may lessen somewhat at the sight of yet another barricade where we'd much prefer to see flowers growing.

And we'll be reminded to continue to include the larger world around us in our prayers of petition.

Father Hemrick is a columnist for Catholic News Service.



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

MORE LETTERS

when Father McBrien wrote his columns of March 27 and April 3. According to him, the devotion of the rosary is in decline. He writes that the church is much healthier now because of it. That must mean that the church is unhealthy when the rosary is popular.

He writes that he didn't want to discourage or demean the rosary, but that is exactly what he did. No one that I know of is placing the rosary above liturgy so why demean the rosary that has been with us for centuries? What does he have to gain? Even though Father McBrien said that at one time the rosary was just something to do to fill in the time before Mass, I find it insulting to us who have a devotion to it and are intelligent enough to pray it at the proper times.

Isn't he aware that our dear Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, has added the Luminous mysteries to the rosary for the purpose of drawing attention and encouraging it?

Isn't he aware that our Pope has made this the YEAR OF THE ROSARY?

Isn't he aware that Our Lady of Fatima urges us every time she appears to pray the rosary?

Isn't he aware that the Rosary Center in Portland, Oregon, has a mailing list which includes 20,000 names and increases by more than 100 each month. With our new technology they get many applications over the Internet. For those who are interested their address is: www.rosary-center.org.

This doesn't sound like a decline to me. It sound like an increase.

Let's face it. The rosary is here to stay.

Come on, Father. Isn't there something good you can say about the rosary?

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Publication of this letter was inadvertently delayed by a snag in our production system.

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