
The Gangster's Crucifix.

Not long ago a gangster died by violence in Pittsburgh. A jewelled crucifix lay during the wake upon his stilled breast. Dr. Clausen, a Baptist minister, was scandalized, it seems. According to newspapers, this minister queried from his pulpit thus:

When a gangster is slain and it is discovered that he has cherished the possession of a precious crucifix, why is there no outcry of shame on the part of the church.....which is guilty of sharing in the crimes these bold brigands commit?

In Pittsburgh there is a Catholic priest named Father Thomas Coakley. Father Coakley was aroused. Happily, he took it upon himself to answer Dr. Clausen and with him hundreds of critics of the Catholic Church. This in part is the way that Father Coakley did it:

To demand moral perfection in this world is an anachronism, possible only to those who have misread the Gospel, and have confused ideas of the divine mission of our Redeemer. We are the Church militant, not the Church triumphant...The Catholic Church, following the command of Christ, hates the sin but loves the sinner. She hates crime but not the criminal.

She cannot pick and choose her subjects. She cannot discriminate in the class or culture or nationality of those who make up her fold. Her door must be open to all who knock, and no lack of courtesy, or gentility, or learning can be a bar to receiving the administrations of her who holds in her hands the chalice of salvation, and never until time shall be no more will she cease in her unwavering hostility to fashionable sins, nor in the exercise of her infinite charity to unfashionable sinners.

Conspicuous sinners, such as gangsters, are, then, conspicuous credentials for the divine character of the Catholic Church...the only Church on earth to which they could belong.

What offends certain outspoken Pharisaical members of the liberal churches is the catholicity of the Church; its unwearied yearning to embrace all mankind, its thirst for souls, good and bad. It was this catholicity which disedified the exclusive, wealthy, high-born, holier-than-thou citizens of Jerusalem at the time of Our Lord. But in spite of their scoffs and sneers Our Savior continued His custom of associating with criminals and sinners. He mingled among them freely and went about His Father's business of dispensing salvation.

We answer the taunt of the "gangster's crucifix" as Christ would answer it, by inviting your attention to the crucified gangster--the good thief on the cross--beside our dying Savior. The Catholic Church must continue to journey through the centuries bearing on her aged shoulders the heaviest of all her burdens, and the greatest obstacle to her success--the daily offenses and scandals of her unworthy members. And, like her Divine Master, hanging on the Cross, she turns, even as did He, to the crucified gangster hanging beside Him, rejoicing that she could save at the death one who had been a disgrace to her during his life.

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Lenten Adoration Curtailed.

No adoration Saturday afternoon. No adoration Sunday except during the 9-o'clock Mass of Exposition. No adoration Monday, Washington's birthday. Adoration will begin again Tuesday morning.

PRAYERS: (ill) William Sheridan (Fr.); Fred Honerkamp (Mor.); Ray Havelick's friend.