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PRAYER BEFORE EXAMINATIONS

Lord, you have told us that we were to ask, seek, and knock. You have told us also that what we prayed for in your name would be granted us by the Father. You have told us further that our petitions would be heard according to the measure of our faith. Lord, I address my request to you today in the terms suggested by you when on earth you instructed your disciples in prayer.

Lord God, before whom I shall have to appear for an examination of my soul, help me to prepare for it by approaching in the right state of mind this examination of my work. I ask that Providence may reward my efforts to study for it by giving me questions on the subjects that I have taken the most trouble to get up. I accept the paper in the spirit of trust. So help me God. Amen.

--Dom Hubert van Zeller

THE FUN'S OVER

With the last big social weekend over and with final examinations only ten days away, there should now be a sharp focus on preparation for the finals. Of course, there's no substitute for the wasted hours of the past semester. But for all, and especially for those who have neglected their duty of application to study during the semester the next ten days must be a time of intensive study.

Preparation for examinations should include prayer. "Without me you can do nothing," our Lord told His Apostles. Naturally, you need a clear mind in a healthy body (a good reason for getting sufficient sleep) to function effectively on the intellectual level. But you also need the peace of mind and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit that comes through conscientious prayer.

The best prayer, of course, is daily Mass. For others who want to do more we suggest periods of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament exposed each afternoon, Monday through Friday, in the Lady Chapel or the rosary and hymns at the Grotto at 6:45 p.m. Monday through Friday.

It's not cowardly or hypocritical to ask for special help to fulfill more perfectly the principal duty of your state in life, to be a student. In fact, it's an act of the virtue of humility to come begging if you know you have failed in these duties in the past. And prayer of petition is also an act of Faith. "If you make any request of the Father, he will grant it to you in my name."

ROSARY AND HYMNS. . . .

. . . at the Grotto. . .

. 6:45 p.m.

Tonight St. Ed's Hall
Wednesday Morrissey
Thursday Zahm Hall
Friday Pangborn Hall

About Books.....

SPOOFING THE INTELLECTUAL

"Have arrived at State U, and am eager to use the next four years to clarify life goals." Thus begins "The Diary of an Intellectual," which is a short section of The Collect'd Writings of St. Hereticus,* by Robert McAfee Brown, a Protestant observer at the Council. "Went to opening chapel service. Decided to shed chapel for next four years in order to develop own point of view, though will resume church attendance when have family."

The diary continues a few days later: "Signed up for course in logic. Discovered logical positivism on first day. Shed belief in God, but still retain belief in man's reasoning capacities."

The next day our diarist records having read Lord of the Flies and having shed his belief in man's reasoning powers. He then spends three days working out a new world-religion, appropriating the best from existing religions. He explains this new religion to his roommate, who is unable to accept belief in "The All-Cohesive Source of Reality," and so our Intellectual sheds his world-religion idea.

In his sophomore year, our Intellectual discovers moral relativism, and sheds everything he hadn't shed in his freshman year. In his junior year, he begins by discovering Camus, and so embraces belief in The Absurd. "Am on the abyss of nothingness," he writes. He soon sheds his abyss of nothingness, however, plus a tweed sports jacket in exchange for a ticket to the fall dance. The dance is a flop and he falls back into the abyss of nothingness.

In the spring semester of his junior year, our Intellectual becomes socially conscious, and signs petitions right and left (though mostly left). He also reads James Baldwin, and sheds The American Way of Life -- although after a weekend with the family, during which time he expounds James Baldwin and listens to the reactions of his father's friends, he sheds James Baldwin.

In his senior year, our Intellectual becomes engaged, and is "ready to lick the world." "Can't wait to get out of here and get started." The engagement, however, is broken, and he reaffirms the tragic view of life.

Ten days later, he has made a firm decision about the future, and feels that things are going to fall into place, particularly through the employment of man's reasoning capacities.

The Collect'd Writings of St. Hereticus, of course, is a spoof on the Intellectual, particularly as he gets himself involved in modern religious mutations. The book contains some excellent advice on "How To Win a Theological Discussion Without Really Knowing Anything," that is, through the foolproof use of "The Superior Knowledge Gambit."

-- Claude L. Bohnm

More by KARL RAHNER on "The Appeal to Conscience"

A moral norm is by nature universal but, precisely as a universal law, is intended to be the rule for the individual case. And so when it is fully grasped and rightly understood and interpreted (that is, understood as the magisterium means it, not just as an individual thinks fit to interpret it), and bears on an individual case, then this unique individual concrete case is bound by the norm and obliged to abide by it. . .

Of course, there will also often be the guiltlessly mistaken conscience which thinks, for special reasons in special circumstances, it may or must act differently from the moral norm which, without its knowing, is laid down by the Church. But, if it is not to degenerate into a merely private subjective voice, the Christian conscience has the duty to order itself by the objective norms. And if the Christian knows that these objective norms are to be found in the teaching of the Church, and if he knows that his case too (like every similar case) is meant by the law, then it is not easy to see how a believing Christian can still logically and guiltlessly come to the conclusion that in his situation the "case" is morally other than the universal law judges it to be. . .

When a man has once realized (and in this age of psychoanalysis one would expect this realization to be widespread; unfortunately it isn't) how easily and in what refined ways he can deceive himself, how quickly what is desired by him appears also justified to him, how hidden and distorted the final standards are by which he in fact judges and values things, how "obvious" something can seem to us when it is in fact a very dubious and problematic case, then he will be more careful in his appeals to a "good conscience." And anyone who has read the first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans has read how God judges the doubtless very "respectable" Jews and Gentiles (and where are there no people who think themselves very respectable?); and he will have been dismayed to find that the "good conscience" of respectable people who know at once what God asks of them and what he "naturally" can't expect of us, is only too often just the punishment and result of their blind but still responsible sinfulness: their real conscience has been muted leaving their heart to say that it will unhindered, and the Scripture says the heart of man is evil from his youth.

If we Christians when faced with a moral decision, really realized that the world is under the Cross on which God himself hung nailed and pierced, that obedience to God's law can also entail man's death, that we may not do evil in order that good may come of it, that it is an error and heresy of this eudemonic modern age to hold that the morally right thing can never lead to a tragic situation from which in this world there is no way out; if we really realized that as Christians we must expect almost to take for granted that at some time in our life our Christianity will involve us in a situation in which we must either sacrifice everything or lose our soul, that we cannot expect always to avoid a "heroic" situation, then there

would indeed be fewer Christians who think that their situation requires a special ruling which is not so harsh as the laws proclaimed as God's laws by the Church, then there would be fewer confessors and spiritual advisers who, for fear of telling their penitent how strict is God's law, fail in their duty and tell him instead to follow his conscience, as if he had not asked, and done right to ask, which among all the many voices clamoring within him was the true voice of God. . .

A man who has learnt -- by the grace of God! -- to beware of man because he is a liar (omnis homo mendax) and so beware of himself because he is a man, will no longer be able to say so lightly: I will make this right with my conscience; what the priests say is just red tape. Must we make the thing right "with our conscience" or in fact -- putting it more exactly and more honestly -- with God? And doesn't God speak more clearly -- precisely in complicated and difficult cases -- by his own word through the mouth of his Church? -- so we can only be certain that we are really hearing the voice of our conscience and not the voice of our own sinful inclinations when this voice agrees with the Church's teaching. . .

But if this is the case, what has become of the freedom of the children of God? Does this not put us back under the rule of the letter which kills and is only the law of sin? (Cf. 1 Cor. 15:56) Isn't it true that we may "love and do what we will"? Is it true that where the Spirit of the Lord, who justifies, teaches and gives us divine life, moves a man, then he is no longer under the law, he is free from the law. . . ?

But in order to be free like this we must really have the Spirit; this Spirit can be lost; and man the liar can deceive himself that he has this Spirit when he really hasn't. We have not got the Spirit if we do not keep God's laws, and we can only keep these laws in the Holy Spirit in whom God's will and God's power are one, and in whom alone we can have true Christian freedom. . . But the only way of knowing whether we have the Holy Spirit in us is precisely by whether we fulfil the law.

. . . We can do "everything" only when we love. But we are not loving if we do evil. Are there not today many "good" Christians who subtly and dishonestly try and make the freedom of Christians a justification for a pact between right living and godlessness, light and darkness, Christ and Belial in their moral life, who do everything they want, good or evil, and then say they still love, instead of really loving (which calls for the greatest renunciation) and then doing everything which a man who really loves God may do?

And so it remains: The commandments of God come truly and plainly out of the mouth of the Church and they require obedience whether in this or that case they are easy to apply or not; they are the will of the living God who has spoken to us through Jesus Christ our Lord . . . The Faith which justifies before God is the loving Faith which does God's will.

--from Nature and Grace (Sheed & Ward, 1964)