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# POWER

by Isaac McDaniel O.S.B.

"More seductive than sex... More addictive than any drug ...More precious than gold," shouts the description of "Power" in Sidney Lumet's new movie by the same name. Does the film exaggerate? The worship of power is alive and well in contemporary America. One has only to see the caricature of power embodied by Rambo as he wields an M-16 to mow down hapless villains. Or the more sophisticated cult of power suggested by assertiveness training seminars. Or the yardstick which measures success by the frequency of one's promotions, rather than the quality of one's work. When it comes to power, as the advertisement for the new movie boasts, "nothing else comes close."

The devil in this Sunday's gospel could hardly have put the case for power more consisely. After Jesus went off to the wilderness to be tested, the devil took him up to a high place and showed him all the kingdoms of the world. Then he said to Jesus, "I will give you all this power and the glory of these kingdoms. I give it to whomever I wish. Bow down in homage before me, and it shall all be yours."

The Gospel story reminds me that the idolatrous lures of power were not invented by our own era. In fact, they are as old as humanity

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itself. If power is an aphrodisiac, as the saying goes, it is also the great narcotic. It allows us momentarily to forget our own insignificance in the larger scheme of the universe. Chasing after power allows us to ignore the fleeting, perishable nature of those things in life which too often we cherish most: our possessions, our work, our achievements, our prestige, even our country and culture. "Man is but a fleeting idea in the mind of God," says Woody Allen, "which is a pretty sobering thought, especially if you've just made a down payment on a house."

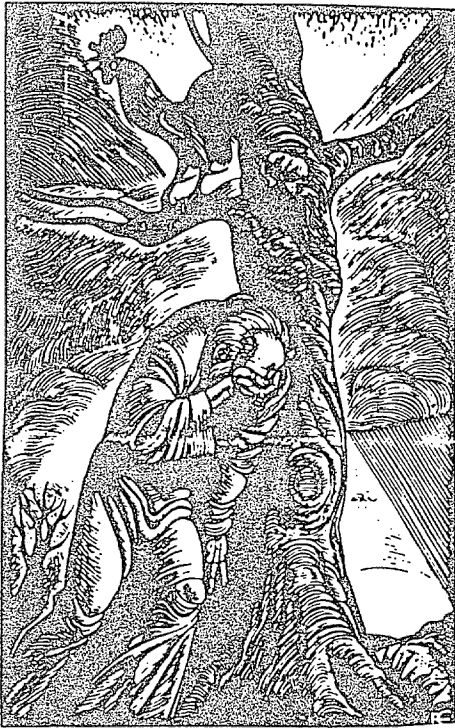
But occasionally our defenses collapse, and we find ourselves staring face to face with our own powerlessness. It may happen when we watch a space shuttle explode. Or when we suddenly lose someone we love. Or our efforts to do good backfire and result in disaster. Such occasions of helplessness remind us of our own mortality.

Yet, instead of remaining causes for despair, such awful moments may actually turn out to be the beginning of wisdom. They may remind us of the unpredictability of life and the fragility of all human striving. They may also bring us closer to God. For, only by accepting our own powerlessness can we begin to tap the source of all real power, that is, the power of God's love. Only by embracing our own powerlessness can we begin to understand Jesus's words in the Gospel story: "You shall do homage to the lord your God and worship Him alone." Only by shedding our own fantasies and compulsions for power can we begin to appreciate the mystery of God's plan for the world. Only thus can we find the freedom to be our real selves. As W.H. Auden put it: "The funniest mortals, and the kindest, are those who are most aware of the baffle of being."

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**U**nless I am much mistaken, the Golden Rule is still the same: invest where the profits are highest, quickest and safest. If that means crushing a few, or many, or numerous human beings, it is regrettable, but, the reasoning goes, that is the inevitable price of progress.

□ ARCHBISHOP HELDER CAMARA



# Worthy of The Name...

*by Peter Lombardo*

blamed the Church for fomenting unrest and rioting against his harsh and cruel rule—just because the Church in the persons of priests, nuns, and lay people was working for social justice and aid to the poor.

Maybe we are complacent or too comfortable. We have perhaps forgotten that Christ's message in His time was revolutionary; it upset the cozy status quo of the pharisees and the Romans. He called a tax collector to be one of His own, spoke with a Samaritan woman, and affected a Roman soldier.



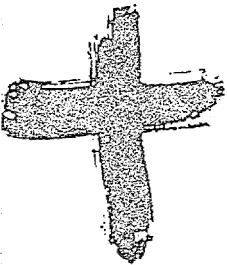
Down to our own day, in the teaching of papal encyclicals on labor, in the revolutionary call of "Populorum Progressio" and in the preferential option for the poor, nothing has changed. The Church calls us to change ourselves and our world. It still upsets a staid establishment.

The good news is not easy. Whoever would try to follow

If you were watching NBC Nightly News the other night, perhaps you were struck as I was, by three stories from widely separated parts of our world—all of which involved the Church in a "political" situation, standing for the good news preached by Christ. First, in the elections in the Philippines, Jaime Cardinal Sin of Manila demanded free elections unfettered by violence or fraud to determine the winner in the contest between President Marcos and Cory Aquino. Second Pope John Paul II, touring India, preached nondiscrimination in a country whose traditional caste structure force most people, especially women, into the lowest ranks. Finally, In Haiti, the oppressive dictatorship of Duvalier

Him must reject oppression, social injustice and discrimination in all their forms—personal and institutional. He or she—we—must work to eliminate the odious effects of poverty and malnutrition and neglect from our world. And we have to start in our own community. Is anybody hungry that I can help?

Is anybody lonely that I can visit? Is anybody hurting that I can comfort? Here on campus we can begin our revolutionary journey to find Christ in those around us, and stifle the cries of the settled to be patient, to wait a while longer. When we do, then we can call ourselves His followers, and be worthy of the name.



Lent 1986

**Personal Reflections on Prayer and Action:**  
Wednesdays, the Lady Chapel:  
7:00 - 7:30PM, Sacred Heart

- February 19th: Mark Searle
- February 26th: Regina Coll, csj
- March 5th: John Dunne, csc
- March 12th: Katherine Tillman

**Living the Challenge of Peace:** Center for Social Concerns  
7:30PM

- February 24th: Fr. George Zabelka  
Chaplain, crew of the Enola Gay which dropped the first atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima.
- March 6th: Ed Zuckerman  
Author, The Day after World War III.
- March 10th: Stuart Speiser  
Author, How to End the Nuclear Nightmare.

**An invitation to service:**  
Each of us have gifts to offer the suffering Christ in our midst. During this Lenten season, the Notre Dame Community is encouraged to share their talents and alms with the poor and lonely in our midst.

**A Call to Reconciliation:**  
Campus-wide Penance Service  
Tuesday, Mar. 18th,  
10:00PM  
Sacred Heart Church

