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THE UNINVOLVED NEW YORKER AND THE GOOD SAMARITAN

In reporting two recent incidents in New York in which respectable citizens stood by while crimes were perpetrated -- murder of a young woman ignored by 38 persons on a homey street in Kew Gardens and the assault of another young woman in an office building with more than 40 persons doing nothing -- Time attempts to analyze the indifference.

"What has happened that these things should be possible? One thing certainly is that the sense of community has been lost in the bigness and bureaucracy of big-city life... Nobody knows his neighbor -- and doesn't want to. And no one wants 'to get involved' with these unknown and unloved neighbors... The Decent Citizen and Taxpayer is apt to feel that taking any kind of action is unwise, unsafe -- and unnecessary."

"Unloved" is the key word in this twentieth-century, not wholly big-city attitude. To see how diametrically opposed it is to the Christian spirit we need only set it beside Christ's parable about the Samaritan whom all generations have called and will call good because he bound up the wounds of a stranger who had been beaten and robbed while travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On that occasion Jesus told His listeners: "Model your conduct on his."

Here in our academic enclosure we are likely to sit back complacently, sure that we would be the Good Samaritan, certain that we love even strangers, that we would become involved, that we of the Notre Dame family have a sense of community. Let's make an examination of conscience. (Murder and rape, of course, aren't the only offenses against God and our fellow man.) Do you become involved when you know that one student cheats another by dishonesty in class work or on an examination? (You'd better or the honor system will never work.) Wouldn't a sense of community jam the church when a Requiem Mass is being sung for a fellow student who has recently died? Do you love your fellow student -- any student -- enough to refrain from beating the system for room selection? Like the priest and Levite do you pass by the fellow student who has been grieved by the loss of a parent or some other member of his family? (How many have had a Mass offered -- or even said a prayer -- to give comfort to the student so afflicted?)

These are all trifles, you say. Maybe, but Christian charity is not turned on and off by a spigot. Either you are swimming -- involved -- in the ocean of God's love or you are not.

WIPING THE SLATE

Catholics bridle at once when anyone suggests that the practice of confession makes it easy to get away with sinning. True, the objection is usually put so crudely that it invites contemptuous dismissal. Even the most ignorant Catholic knows that, if confession and absolution are available, this implies no permission for repeated sinning; and it is drummed into every Catholic from childhood that a genuine sorrow and a sincere purpose of amendment are necessary for forgiveness. A Catholic may have illusions about the likelihood of his future sinning, but he is aware, often painfully, that unless in going to confession he is turning his back on sin and relinquishing any intention of future sin he is making a bad confession. The sacrament of penance demands that we stop sinning and helps us to do this. And no Catholic thinks otherwise.

But are we right to be so complacent about our use of confession? I think there are grounds for asking whether confession does not sometimes serve as a palliative, quietening consciences that ought to be roused. People at times seem to regard confession as a regular wiping of the slate, leaving them spiritually quits, once more at a dead level or zero, from which blank state they begin the new period up to next reckoning. Every week, every month, every two or three months, every year, or after a mortal sin, the accounts are balanced, things are straightened out, and you start again as if your previous spiritual history, what you had done, had no further relevance, no repercussions on what you were now and would be in the future. Oh yes, there is a debt of temporal punishment, but this is like a bill that can be paid off in small installments by penances or canceled by indulgences without seriously affecting your manner of life.

In short, the process of getting rid of sin is regarded as impersonal. Confession provides the juridical machinery. To use it we have to fulfill conditions and give undertakings, but then the process goes through and the business is finished with. No further concern with our sin is called for. With this mentality, how easy it is to forget that the first confession after conversion from sin may well be but the beginning of a long, arduous climb, perhaps lasting several years, from the habits of a sinful life to a state of normal Christian living! That first confession is a commitment to a prolonged struggle against sin and its results. It re-establishes the sinner in grace, but it does not automatically erase the marks and grooves that sin has etched deep in him nor remove the need for a long penitential effort at spiritual restoration. The immediate grant of absolution should not obscure all that remains to be done personally. Meaningful subsequent confessions are stages in a personal spiritual growth -- not the vague gestures of a half-converted sinner marking time.

Repentance is a very personal process. It concerns our self-commitment, the fundamental option giving direction to our lives.

And it is a continuing process, never completed in this life. Although the change from one fundamental option to another, from sin to charity, is instantaneous, it is usually prepared for gradually, and then afterwards the new basic choice has to be slowly embodied in our life and allowed to penetrate every part of our personality. Confession, as it is called popularly, is a sacrament of repentance. It is in fact the visible, sacramental and therefore ecclesial expression of our personal repentance and its insertion through the Church into the mystery of Christ. This making of repentance sacramental does not just express it but brings it to full actuality under the action of Christ. Thus the sacrament is the cause of repentance as well as its embodiment. But the sacrament does not in the slightest degree replace the personal process of repentance and all that this implies. It is there to cause, perfect and embody

our repentance. It is no substitute for even the smallest part of that personal activity.

SENIORS! The time for a general confession is getting short. Those with problems -- don't leave Notre Dame without settling them. Others, without problems, perhaps need a spur to their complacency. For all, a general confession provides a spiritual springboard for the new and different life ahead. Don't put off making one. You'll never again have so large a choice of confessors.

To say that there are two ways for a Christian sinner to be justified, one, more difficult, consisting in an act of perfect contrition, the other, easier, consisting in imperfect contrition plus the sacrament of penance, is a piece of bad theology. There is only one way of justification for the Christian: namely, personal repentance perfected by charity and expressed sacramentally. All per-

sonal repentance in a Christian is sacramental, even if it does not receive its full sacramental reality from priestly absolution. (Needless to say, this completion is demanded wherever possible.) On the other hand, if a Christian comes to confession and absolution with his contrition or repentance still imperfect, the working of the sacramental forum is to perfect it and bring him to the love of God. The sinner must always turn back to God in love if he is to be justified. The sacrament does not in any way lessen the requirements of repentance. Does it make forgiveness easier? Yes, but by being a means of achieving repentance, not by partly replacing it.

To regard confession as a cancellation of sin that dispenses us from the personal activity otherwise needed to disengage from it, is to abuse the sacrament.

Charles Davis
in America (May 23, 1964)

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IN YOUR CHARITY please pray for the following: Deceased -- father of Bill Quinn of Farley; father of Ray Mannion, Off-Campus; grandfather of Steve Totti of Farley; William Thomas Potter, '62; George Koch, '25; William F. Fox, Jr., '20; mother of Thomas J. Greene, '60. Ill -- Father Henry Geuss, C.S.C., (heart attack).

Matters Liturgical.....

AMERICAN BISHOPS' ENGLISH MASS VERSION APPROVED

The Holy See has confirmed decrees made by the Bishops of the United States on how English will be used in the Mass in this country.

The U.S. Bishops' decisions, adopted at a full meeting of the American Hierarchy in Washington last April 2, were confirmed by the new Vatican commission for implementing the Ecumenical Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy in a document signed by its chairman, Cardinal Giacomo Lercaro of Bologna, and sent to Cardinal Francis Spellman, the ranking member of the American Hierarchy.

The dates when the English use will go into effect are contingent on the time needed by publishing firms to prepare standard editions of altar Missals and rituals. A tentative goal is the beginning of the new liturgical year, the first Sunday of Advent, November 29.

These changes are only temporary, but they may be in force for as much as ten years while the new liturgical commission works on extensive revisions of Mass texts and rites.

SAD BUT TRUE -- Some even at Notre Dame have failed to make their Easter duty. Next Sunday, Trinity Sunday, is the deadline.

MASS CHANGES IN OUTLINE

Service of the Word

Prayers at the foot of the altar:
Latin -- "Introibo ad altare Dei..."

Introit: ENGLISH

Kyrie: ENGLISH (priest and people alternating) -- "Lord, have mercy.."

Gloria: ENGLISH (priest and people together) -- "Glory to God..."

Collect: Latin

Epistle: ENGLISH (facing people)

Gradual: ENGLISH

Gospel: ENGLISH (facing people)

Homily: ENGLISH

"Prayer of the Faithful" (when introduced): ENGLISH

Creed: ENGLISH (priest and people)
-- "I believe in one God..."

Eucharistic Service

Offertory hymn: ENGLISH

Other Offertory prayers, including "Orate, fratres," and Secret prayer:
Latin

Preface: Latin -- "Vere dignum et justum est..."

Sanctus: ENGLISH (priest and people)
-- "Holy, holy, holy..."

All the rest of the Canon: Latin

Lord's Prayer: ENGLISH (priest and people) -- "Our Father..."

Agnus Dei: ENGLISH (priest and people) -- "Lamb of God..."

Other prayers preceding the priest's Communion: Latin

Ecce Agnus Dei: ENGLISH -- "Behold the Lamb of God..."

Domine, non sum dignus: ENGLISH (priest and people) -- "Lord, I am not worthy..."

Communion hymn: ENGLISH

Postcommunion: Latin

Dismissal and final blessing: ENGLISH

Last Gospel: Latin