



THE WITNESS

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To Pilate's Great Astonishment

by Carter Heyward

My name is Pilate. I am a priest of the Church. I am a seminary teacher. I am a person, very much like any other person. I am afraid of my irresponsibility, I fear that my inadequacies will wind up crucifying people against whom I have nothing really. I am afraid that I will be a bad priest. A selfish friend. A poor mother or father. A destructive lover. A weak student. An irrelevant teacher. A basically weak-kneed woman who only pretends to be calm, cool, collected, courageous. I am afraid that I may turn my back on others at any moment. I cannot bear the guilt and the burden of responsibility, for I now see myself as irresponsible. My name is Pilate, and I am ashamed of what I did to Jesus three days ago.

Lying in my bed, I begin to wake restlessly. It's early. I'm depressed — and still tired. Sleeping it off has made me only sleepier. But being the governor of the province, being a priest of the Church, being a person with work to do, classes to meet, meetings to hold, I pull myself up by my own bootstraps (as I have been taught), and I rise.

Into the kitchen. Put on the coffee. Into the bathroom. Start the tub. Into the hall. Pick up the newspaper. Into the world. Sigh.

It is early on the third day. Jesus is dead and buried and I am alive and buried. And hurried. And hassled. I wish it hadn't happened. But it did. I wish I could forget. But I can't. Guilt put me to sleep. Perhaps guilt will allow me to continue sleeping as I move through this day.

I take my bath and eat my breakfast, I read the *New York Times*, only to see, of course, that burial services have been held for Jesus Jones and Jesus Rodriguez and Jesus Smith, and that Jesus so-and-so was bombed in Cambodia and Ireland, and that Jesus Gose has been admonished by Jesus Gressle and Jesus Beebe is being tried by Jesus Burt. I wash my hands, and I go into the bedroom to get dressed.

Reaching into the top drawer for my clerical collar, I glance forward a little into the mirror. It's the first time in a long time I've looked at myself. I move a little closer,

and engage myself with my eyes.

I am astonished! For there in front of me I do not see a hardened, destructive governor. I do not see a defiant, disrespectful woman priest. I do not see the perfect mother, father or child. I do not see a shrewd business-person. I do not see a brilliant student or teacher. I do not see an invulnerable lover. I do not see a tough-minded, unbending bishop.

I see a human being, with soft, sad eyes. I see tears. I see tiredness and pain and guilt. Looking even more deeply into those eyes, I see what is invisible to the eye: I see hope, and dreams, and longing, and intentions, and caring, and talent, and deep, deep depth. I feel my hands. They are warm and moist, and maybe even bloody. I sense my breathing. It is full and heavy and rich, broken only by a gasp for deeper breath. I widen my eyes, and a few tears drop from my well. I see light. I am becoming awakened to something good. I am beginning to feel alive!

Breathing deeply, I close my eyes. And a stream of faces rolls before me: parents, sisters, brothers, friends and lovers, bishops, other colleagues, students and teachers, indeed myself. Each of us, and all of us, alone and together alone, partners and soulmates in community with humankind. Each of us, and all of us, perhaps stretched with open arms onto a cross. Letting myself sink and rise in realization of our terrible oneness as sisters and brothers, letting myself drift and soar in acknowledgment of our simple and shared humanness — our pains and weaknesses, our joys and strengths, letting myself sob and laugh simultaneously, I open my eyes to see.

I see the daylight breaking in the mirror. I am beginning to feel like myself again, no less the weak and wobbly person who sent Jesus to the Cross, and no less a caring, human person myself. No less guilty, I am beginning to experience grace. No less Pilate, the governor, I am beginning to wonder if perhaps my being is rooted in all human beings, including each person I have sent to death. No less an accuser, I am beginning to see myself as accused, screwed to the wall, nailed to the cross. No less a sinner, I am beginning to feel a saving peace within myself.

My name is Pontius Pilate. I am a human being. A person of God. Thanks be to God, who lives in Christ, and to Christ who lives in me. And thanks be to this Christ for a peace that I neither deserve, nor understand.

Alleluia! Amen!

Carter Heyward: Instructor, Union Theological Seminary.

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Minneapolis Neither the Time nor The Place

by Robert L. DeWitt

DIOCESAN PRESS SERVICE NEWS RELEASE — *A 10-member Board of Inquiry in the Episcopal Church appointed to investigate charges against four bishops who participated in the ordination of 11 women deacons to the priesthood last July 29, has reported that "as a matter of law" it "is without jurisdiction" and that "the proper forum" for dealing with the charges is the House of Bishops.*

By a vote of 8-2 the Board has reported to Presiding Bishop John M. Allin that it found that "the core of the controversy here is doctrinal," which means, according to the canons of the Church, that the House of Bishops rather than a Board of Inquiry has jurisdiction.

It needs to be said, clearly and strongly, that Minneapolis is not the place, nor the time, for the settling of the issue of the ordination of women in the Episcopal Church. It needs to be said, clearly and strongly, that the place for the resolution of that issue is wherever a congregation, or any comparable company of the faithful, desires the temporary or ongoing sacramental ministrations of a woman priest. The place is wherever a diocesan bishop who, with his Standing Committee, is convinced of the calling and qualifications of a woman deacon in his diocese, and proceeds to ordain her. And the time? The time is now.

Consider these facts. The House of Bishops has twice declared itself favorably on the theological principle involved, a few months ago voting almost three to one in favor of the ordination of women. At least three diocesan bishops have made clear their position that waiting for Minneapolis is, for them, simply giving the Church a last chance to vote correctly — i.e., affirmatively. There can be little doubt that there are other bishops, undeclared publicly, who agree. The present women priests have celebrated the Eucharist in Oberlin, Washington, Rochester, Reading and Cambridge. Such celebrations will continue, and proliferate.

This is not a matter of schism or anarchy, but the wide-scale expression of an emerging fact in the life of our Church. In the long history of Anglicanism there is a strong tradition of honoring new realities which have spontaneously come "on stage" before their full and formal canonical recognition. We, as Anglicans and Christians, are not essentially a body governed by Robert's Rule of Orders, but by the Holy Spirit which has Her* own sense of place, Her own sense of time.

This new reality in the life of our Church will not be less real if Minneapolis were to vote negatively, nor more real if Minneapolis were to vote affirmatively. Facts are not subject to majority vote. They have their own

authentic existence, which essentially calls for recognition.

However, there is a role with respect to this issue for the convention which meets in Minneapolis a year and a half from now. It would be the modest and routine task of charging the proper committee to see to it that appropriate changes are made which would adjust our written formularies so they conform to this new in-thrust of the Spirit into the life of the Church.

**Centuries ago, the Holy Spirit was referred to in the feminine gender.*

Letters to the Editor

The Witness reserves the right to condense all letters.

I read the whole issue of *The Witness* (3-9-75) the day it arrived. I think the brevity and the clarity of the magazine allows, even invites, one to do what I did — sit down immediately and read it. But it's like a double whammy; the second or after-blow comes hours later when you're reading the daily newspaper or brushing your teeth or driving your car. I found myself going back, particularly to the back Statement of Affirmation and Invitation and to Berrigan's poem. The brief pieces by Stringfellow and Peggy Case also made their points well. A good issue of *The Witness*.—Terrence Dosh, Minneapolis

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Many thanks for the year's subscription of *The Witness*. A fine paper — almost provocative — that we need and I look forward to receiving and reading it.—Abrazos afectuosos en Cristo, F. Reus-Froylan, Obispo, Diocesis Misionera de Puerto Rico

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Because of my satisfaction in having *The Witness* restored, and my pleasure in its attractive cover and format, with its worthwhile contents, I am glad to pay the subscription, much as I appreciate your generous offer.—Frances Warner, Titusville, PA

Revolution with Marx and Jesus?

by David Gracie

On the Lower East Side of New York a priest is working who believes Karl Marx was a prophet and that Christians had better relate to Marx's prophetic teaching if they want to be a part of God's action today. "The Old Testament prophets spoke against injustice. Marx did the same, but he went on to explain the source of injustice and inhumanity." The priest who said that is David Garcia. He is rector of St. Mark's in the Bowery, where he was called in 1969 to develop a Hispanic ministry.

St. Mark's is well-known as a center for off-Broadway theater and poetry readings. In the midst of the suffering and confusion of the Lower East Side, it is a home of creativity. Currently, two 18th Century graveyards are being transformed into beautifully contoured playgrounds by young people working with landscape artists.

It is also a political center. The former rectory houses a photo-offset press which is there for the use of "The Movement." Activists are trained to do quality work, producing papers like "Puerto Rico Libre!", the bulletin for the Committee for Puerto Rican Decolonization. Upstairs that committee has its offices, as does the Mexican Information Center. A library is in the basement for groups doing research on the power structure.

Of course, there is a worshipping congregation, too. But even the sanctuary speaks of the struggle for justice. Gone are the altar and the brass. In their place is a 25-foot cross made from beams taken from a burned-out tenement building. Behind the cross is a faded African liberation flag that had been used in an effort to stop the construction of Rockefeller's State Office Building in Harlem.

A simple table is now the center of the liturgical action with folding chairs circled around it. If you pick up a copy of the St. Mark's Liturgy, you sense that it is to the Zebra Book what off-Broadway theater is to Broadway.

The prayers address God as "the liberator" and the congregation is called on to participate fully as ministers of liberation. The radical simplicity of this Christian meeting-hall is set in a diadem of stained glass windows from another day.

I went to talk to David about Karl Marx and ask him how he was translating Marx's insights into political action, but the key to understanding Garcia came in our discussion of the Eucharist. "We wrote the St. Mark's liturgy to overcome the paralysis of faith," said. "We want our prayer to become praxis." He went on to tell me how they introduced the St. Mark's way of doing the sermon, in which the people are the preachers. "One Sunday when it came time for the sermon the clergy asked the people to give the Good News. We sat in silence and waited. It was a long silence." But on succeeding Sundays people opened up and now the preaching is fully participatory and represents the response of the people of God to the reading of His Word.

Taking Garcia Seriously

Paralyzed Christians, leading private lives, unable to get outside of themselves to join in the people's movements — these are the persons this pastor wants to cure. He told me of a woman, a very private person, who was facing death with the support of the St. Mark's congregation. She surprised everyone by praying on one of the last Sundays of her life for those who were fighting for freedom in Latin America. She faced the moment of death with courage, telling David she had finally discovered the right relationship between the self and society.

Such a pastor you take seriously. You set aside prejudices and listen, because he obviously has something to teach. And if he wants to do it in terms of Marxism, well, you take that seriously, too.

Identification with the poor and exploited we understand. But why the identification with the political left? David's answer was practical: the left is the source of the solutions to people's problems. His reply also was prophetic: We need Marx's understanding of history if we are going to understand God's saving work today. History is the arena of salvation and God saves his people politically and economically.

David thinks we have no real choice in the matter. As he sees it, the operation of capitalism threatens destruction of the globe. So, for the sake of the earth's preservation, a socialist alternative has to be forged. We

didn't have much time to deal with these convictions on a theoretical level because most of our discussion concerned Puerto Rico. David believes that the way capitalism operates can be seen very clearly by a look at the economy of that island colony. The contrast, he believes, between Puerto Rico and Cuba makes the case for socialism.

David took two documents from St. Mark's files for my inspection. They presented a picture of exploitation and manipulation of the Puerto Rican people by American corporations working through the present government of Puerto Rico. One was a copy of an extensive report prepared for Governor Colon in November, 1973, on employment and educational opportunities in the commonwealth. The second was a 30-page ad in the April, 1974, *Fortune* magazine, placed there by the government of Puerto Rico.

Sterilization, Migration

The report to the Governor presented the prospect of an unemployment rate of over 18 percent on the island by 1985 unless the following measures were taken: massive sterilization of women (it was noted that 33 percent had already been sterilized through the government and private birth control programs); a migration of 8,000 to 10,000 people a year to the U.S. and a massive re-introduction of tourism, development of agro-business, the superport and mining.

Working people are the objects of these policies. They do not create them; they suffer under them. David told me the migration amounts to forced migration since everyone wants to return. Now the government of Puerto Rico is planning to develop contracts with U.S. industry to ship more laborers to the continent.

The *Fortune* ad invites and justifies further exploitation of the land and people by American corporations: "Puerto Rico is the only place under the U.S. flag to offer industry total tax exemption." It goes on to say that "100 percent tax exemption is just the icing on the cake" because there are the additional advantages of a wealth of labor in a land where the federal minimum wage does not apply. (In 1973 the average hourly industrial wage was \$2.16 versus \$4.17 in the U.S.).

These workers are characterized as "eager and dependable" and "because jobs are so important to these workers, absenteeism and job turnover are low."

Various figures are listed to prove how this capitalist development has benefited the people of Puerto Rico, showing that literacy and life expectancy have increased

during the period of U.S. economic domination (1940-1973). But it is clear from the ad itself and from the report to Colon that Puerto Rico faces a continuing crisis. What wealth has been generated by capitalist development is poorly distributed and unemployment is so high as to call for brutal measures to reduce the size of the working class.

To David Garcia the only alternative is the socialist development of the island, the creation of a workers' state on the Cuban model. As he sees it, Puerto Rico is now what Cuba was before its revolution except that the terror of a Batista is not present. Less blatant ways of forcing people to accept their subjugation are employed. But the prostitution and gambling that flourished in Havana is now in San Juan. And, sad to note, the seminaries in which we train our candidates for the ministry have moved from Cuba to Puerto Rico too, a symbol of the Church's alliance with capitalism.

Expect Trouble

Anyone who supports a socialist future for Puerto Rico can expect trouble from the U.S. government. To prove that point David told me the story of Carlos Feliciano, a young carpenter who was arrested in New York City in 1970 and accused of 41 bombings. The papers alleged that he had backing from Cuba for these terrorist activities. According to David this was a frame-up intended to break the movement for Puerto Rican liberation in the States. It followed the pattern of other government frame-ups during that period; the "plumbers" were even involved. Feliciano has faced two trials, defended by William Kunstler. In the Bronx he was acquitted of all charges, in Manhattan of the major charges, and he is now appealing conviction on the minor counts. The center of the broad-based defense committee was at St. Mark's and David is its chairman.

I think to myself that it is probably David's relationship to the Latin American struggle that enables him to enter so openly and warmly into the alliance with Marxism and the Marxists. He is not weighed down and inhibited by European and Russian experiences. He tells me that he knows the Church has been repressed in socialist states, but he points to Cuba and the welcome given to Christian activists by Fidel. And he speaks of the many Christians in Latin America who are being helped by Marxism "to scientifically understand force, violence, racism, domination. Because of the class analysis, power is given an objective form and is no longer viewed mystically and far off from the village or

the city where they live." Their relationship to Marxism varies, he notes (and David himself comes on as no 'hard-liner'): "Some Christians speak of a vague socialism, others of open alliance with the left, but they all believe that change is necessary in the economic relationships in their country."

So we return to the main theme: As Christians we need to be enabled to see the need for change and take part in it. "Christians have been worshipping a static God, a distant lawgiver, a keeper of order rather than the dynamic God who overturns and makes things new. The God they have been worshipping shows no anger or compassion; he is sterile." David also calls that false God a "bourgeois God" because it is the old order that he is there to protect.

When David writes down his convictions he reads very much like Gustavo Gutierrez and the other Latin American theologians of liberation:

"The Christian participates in the revolution and on the side of the proletariat because the radical act of love requires a concrete expression of solidarity with suffering and the struggle to reclaim and make the land new again. The Christian brings a critique of power whose center is God and whose will is being revealed in history past, present and in the future. God is constantly overturning the convenient formulas and ways of life that are unholy in his eyes. This means social classes as well as ruling ideologies. Many translate this to mean a rejection of Marxism as ideology. This misses the point completely. Ideology will not save but can itself be a form of God acting to overturn the hardness of heart in a people. Marxism becomes the appropriate ideological counter to a sterile Christianity and a strong capitalism. Implicit in Marxism are the promises of freedom and wholeness. They are real for those who seek to be delivered."

Dom Helder Camara of Brazil is one of his models, living proof that a leader of the Church can stand with the people over against a repressive and destructive system. I ask him if he really expects that kind of Christian witness in the Protestant Episcopal Church U.S.A. He points to a saving remnant: "Church people politicized by Vietnam, Black and Puerto Rican clergy who work with their people; conscious women who are increasingly able to identify with other oppressed elements in society . . . This group is coming into being within the old Church. You see them at any convention. Any movement person in any town would tell you who they are."

David Gracie: Urban Missioner, Diocese of Pennsylvania.

Christ, Not Marx, The Liberator

by Thomas Gumbleton

David Garcia sounds like an impressive man, but I'm not convinced he would be completely open to the questions some Christians might ask of him. He is sold on his ideas, and maybe that's good. But he doesn't seem to leave open paths of evaluation, criticism or re-thinking.

Politics mixed with religion has been a taboo for centuries. It is only of late that people have begun to see that the two go hand in hand. They must if they are to transform the world. But in the process there is always the danger of the Church's "becoming the world" and that is some thing it can never do. The Church must be *in* the world but not *of* it.

Garcia sees Marx as a prophet. I don't. Marx may well have been many things (leftist, modern thinker, a man ahead of his times and more). But not every man who is ahead of his times is a prophet. Does Marx have something useful to offer a society like ours? Absolutely. Does he have criteria for measuring the strengths and weaknesses of one or more forms of government? Yes. Could some or even all of his ideas be used successfully by a country like the United States? Perhaps. Was he a prophet? I don't think so.

Garcia has something to teach. It seems to me the first source of teaching is the Gospel. I would see Jesus Christ as the Liberator, the One Who frees the oppressed, and makes all things new again. And in so doing, He remains *in* the world and not *of* it.

The Church must involve itself in the world. The 1971 Synod of Roman Catholic Bishops called for this involvement: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel . . ."

But the Church cannot and must not become identified

with any specific economic system — Marxism, Socialism or Capitalism. To an extent, the Church has failed to live up to this demand. She has, in the past, failed to criticize capitalism as it ought to be criticized. It would be a mistake, I think, if she failed to criticize Marxism too.

In many ways, Marxism works toward the building of the Kingdom of God. We can learn much from the Marxist effort. There are, however, three major differences that have to be taken into account:

(1) While building a "better world" Christians recognize that a sinful universe is being developed along with a redeemed one. All things derive their ultimate meaning from their reference to God and, lacking this, they can become twisted and sinful. Good things — a nation, science, money — can become idols.

(2) Christians accept the "wisdom of the Cross." This makes no sense in secular terms. Christ weeping over Jerusalem, rather than calling in military legions, is hard for a secularist to comprehend.

(3) Christians have a vision that goes beyond history. This affects their values and their understanding of the meaning of life. The "perfect world" is related to and flows from this world, but its full achievement lies beyond history and awaits the second coming of Christ.

Garcia states that "the solutions to people's problems are going to come from the political left." I am not so sure. It appears to me that solutions will come only when there are no lefts and rights, no conservatives and liberals. Solutions will come only out of unity in Christ.

This may sound idealistic. It is. It may sound impossible in a world such as ours. It is . . . if there is no hope that the liberals and conservatives, the rights and the lefts, may met aside differences in ideologies, in political bents, in personal views, and unite themselves in the call of justice and peace.

Throughout all our efforts — no matter how or where we see the answers coming from — one thing must be kept in mind: we are doing God's work, not our own. We are called to do it His way, not our own. Marxism may have (and does have) much to offer, but I think Garcia might be putting too much emphasis in a human, and therefore, frail system. Even though valuable, such a system will be disappointing.

The Most Rev. Thomas Gumbleton: Roman Catholic Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Detroit.

Dialogue For Silence

"It is part of man's nature that he cannot express the whole truth in words." (Max Picard)

The President:

The late August quadrangle
green refuge of my young men and women
from their boredom
is empty now
an island
silent in the humming city
where only light and shade contend
over thick grass
in ribbed and tented trees
that stand unmoving in the lucid air
and rooted peace of morning.
My friends, I ask you in this
luminous moment what the silence says:
with every blade and leaf struck by calm
cloudless skies transfixed in clarity
would not Oedipus himself
have parleyed with his father-king
or fierce Saturn spared his sons?
could not we
the aimlessly young, the inevitably old
snatch the answer from the instant?
But no the silence doesn't doesn't answer.

The Philosopher:

The silence is the answer,
at least when silence is so useless.
Poor earth, air,
fire, water
churning endlessly
in man's machine for profit!
But this morning stillness
yields nothing
except heart's peace
sheer golden emptiness
that hints at everything.

The Linguist:

Silence: absolute and first
before desire or death
speech: from its fulness
delivered by the spirit
with mothering silence before
mortal silence after
silence bearing all between
sustaining impartially

our alphabetic stammering
the lyrics of our wisdom
our cries of love and whispered lies.

The Scientist:

The theorems of silence are
dawn
tree's growth
snowfall
sorrow's end
the rose
the dream of music
the concord of evening lights
stilled water
mute bells
this moment of arrival.

The Student:

What we are saying is:
forget the endless juggling
the severing of work and slack.
Be content
with the act called love,
fool enough
for the simple marriage
of belief and deed.
And then trace out for us in quiet
the myth of life and death,
the one word we will accept.

The Theologian:

What is finally lacking to your tongue's truth
fill out with the scratchings of anxiety,
the dumb-show of hope,
imperfect poems of the heart.
Practice like the acrobat
inching across the thin line of language,
the net of infinite silence below,
who hears One Word
(filled beyond overflowing
radiant with all completion)
—and is glad to fall.

—Daniel Burke, F.S.C.
President, LaSalle College, Philadelphia

Joe, Beer, Bologna, and Me (fiction)

by Henry N. Williams

When I packed my vestments after my final service at St. Philip's, I made a silent vow never to put them on again. Janet and I had already moved to Lauriston where I was to teach high school English that fall, and I performed my last duties at the church by commuting back and forth. My identification with the parish I had served seven years diminished rapidly; and at the end, I felt more like an itinerant supply priest than a rector.

Perhaps if St. Philip's had been an urban church caught up in contemporary social issues or active in experiments in group dynamics, it might have been different. Maybe I was too young to be relegated to a bucolic village church which survived only because it was well endowed and historic. At any rate, I became disillusioned with the ministry and began looking for a way out almost a year before I finally quit.

There's a lot of conflict and inconsistency in my reasons for leaving the ministry. I admit it. Sometimes I was tempted to shock my parishioners by announcing from the pulpit that I had lost my faith. On other occasions, I wanted to boast and scold in precisely the opposite vein that my faith was too large for them, that it was a real faith which could only be lived and did not relate to the lifeless activities of the church. If my reasons were confused, however, it was a passionate confusion; and I was certain of one thing: I wanted out. I was tired of functioning as their witch doctor, whose incantations and robes and ritual performances overshadowed my efforts to serve them as a teacher and moral leader and to relate to them as a moral person. I felt no more control over the final product of my labors than a factory worker on an assembly line might feel. That's how alienated I had become.

On the other hand, "going secular," as I liked to put it

at the time, seemed like emancipation. It's funny how you change. I can still remember fantasizing when I was in seminary about how it would feel to put on the collar. Now I wanted nothing more than to take it off and look and act just like anyone else. How appropriate it seemed that Janet was pregnant for the first time, even though we had never tried to postpone having children in the parish. I liked my new routine of walking down to the newsstand in the morning and just saying "Hi" to people or nothing at all instead of "Good morning." And I relished the matter-of-fact way my neighbors treated me and felt almost complimented if they threw in a swear word every now and then.

My favorite neighbor was Joe. Josef Hlinka was his full name, and he was a retired laborer who could just barely negotiate in English although he had been in this country as long as I had been alive. At St. Philip's all my relationships had a one-way focus. It was my role to counsel and give advice. Often I felt insecure because I had no more real knowledge how to solve their problems than the people who came to me. Only my skill with words was superior, and sometimes I could help them find the right words to express their feelings. For some people, it seemed to make a difference. With Joe, however, verbal proficiency counted for nothing. Roles were reversed. He knew all about those things which suddenly became so important to me as a new homeowner, how much linseed oil to add to paint or when to plant grass seed. Sometimes it appeared that, because his English was broken, because he never read anything, because he had very little formal education, he was all the wiser and more knowledgeable about the things which really mattered. No doubt he was as ignorant and bigoted as the next guy; but if he was, he kept it to himself. He was not given to generalizations and limited his opinions to practical matters about which he knew something.

Because of Joe's limitations with English, what he did say came out with an unintended bluntness. He was completely incapable of disguising his questions and could not cover or dress up what he had to say. This simplicity and directness in his speech was one of the things I liked best about him.

I remember one conversation in particular. The old man and I were sitting on my back porch steps. We had been working on my lawn mower, and we were both tired from pulling on the rope. "You used to be a priest," he said. "Did you quit to get married?"

"No," I told him. "I was an Episcopal priest. Episcopal priests are allowed to get married."

"Aren't you afraid you go to hell?"

"No, I don't believe in hell."

Joe broke into a wide grin. "Good," he said. "Lot of shit."

"That's right," I agreed. "A lot of shit."

"I quit long time ago. She thinks (referring to his wife) I still angry because no more Slovak priest, no more preach Slovak. But no. Lot of shit. That's why."

"Right," I said again. "A lot of shit."

"Wait a minute," he said. He got up, walked over to his house, and went in. In a moment he reappeared with a bottle of beer in each hand. One of them he gave to me, and he took a long swig from the other. As I lifted mine to my lips and drank, he watched me and laughed. "I like you," he said. Then we drank the rest of our beer without saying anything more, and he took the empties back into the house with him.

Several weeks later, Josef Hlinka was carrying ashes in his basement and he fell over dead. I learned about it that afternoon when his wife, whom I had never met, and his brother came to see me.

"Hello, I'm Mrs. Hlinka," she said. "Joe's . . ." and she burst into tears.

"She's Maria Hlinka, Joe's wife," interrupted the man, "and I'm Louis, Joe's brother. May we talk to you?"

"Come in. Sit anywhere," I said. "What's the matter?"

"I lose my Joe . . . I lose my Joe . . ."

"Joe died this morning," Louis explained. "I understand you are an Episcopal priest. Can you still do a burial service?"

"Yes, I can, but why not have your own priest do it?"

"Because the old priest won't do it. Joe had a big argument with him years ago when he brought in a new assistant who didn't speak Slovak. After that there was no more lessons and no more sermons in Slovak at Mass, and Joe and Maria haven't gone to church since that time. Joe also stopped giving money to the church. Sometimes Maria secretly sends an offering with me and asks me to light a candle; but as far as I know, Joe never gave nothing after that time. So, the old priest won't bury him, and he won't let his assistant do it either."

What could I do? I agreed to read the service, and I also went with them that afternoon to choose a plot in the cemetery just above the rose garden, which wasn't associated with any church.

When we got there, Mrs. Hlinka had one thing on her mind. "For two people," she told the salesman who showed us around. "I lie next my husband 47 years. I lie next him here too. Ground not blessed, but I go with

him. I go hell with him."

"Listen to me, Maria," I said. "This is holy ground. God made this ground, and He doesn't need a priest or anybody else to bless it. And God made Joe too — and you. He's not going to reject anything He made because of a fight between a man and a priest. You understand? You'll lie here with your husband when the time comes because it's right." I was surprised at my agitation and the intensity of my feelings about right and wrong in this case. In another context, I would have said I wasn't sure whether I believed in God or whether God-talk made any sense. I surmised from his few cryptic remarks on the subject that Joe's convictions were much the same as mine. Yet it was apparent that, if people were going to engage in God-talk, I would defend the kind of God I used to believe in when I believed in God. He was a God who cared about people, not rituals, the sort of God who gave solace and courage to people like Maria, not a God who would conspire with a petty priest who wanted to punish people for not agreeing with him.

I was uneasy about the service, more nervous, in fact, than I had been since my first days in the ministry. I was afraid I'd grown rusty in the few months which had passed since I'd presided over a worship service. It was not just the span of time, either; it was the fact that I had stopped using my prayerbook altogether and the degree to which I had repressed the whole business. Also, I reacted to the tension which existed between the kindness and the hypocrisy of what I had consented to do, the irony of an agnostic priest reading the burial office for an agnostic friend to give assurance and comfort to his wife. I derived a sort of defiant pleasure from the thought that it was an action which would scandalize the doctrinaire, only to find that it scandalized me as well.

I drove out to the cemetery alone ahead of everyone else, and there I sat behind the wheel of my car reviewing the service. I was going to combine parts of the service normally read in church with the segment intended for use at the grave. Back and forth I paged checking my markers and glancing in the rearview mirror to see whether the others had arrived. Finally, when I saw the procession round the corner, I got out of the car, straightened my cassock and cincture, put on my surplice and stole, and walked slowly to meet the hearse. Then I conducted the small company of mourners to the grave and read the service.

Afterwards I went back with these people to Mrs. Hlinka's house. They were strangers like most of the

Pittsburgh Network Organizes

In the new Great Hall of Calvary Church, Pittsburgh, on Saturday, March 22, 15 men and women met to ask why they should become part of a national Church and Society Network.

All but one belong to the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh and are variously and historically involved in "social action." (The one exception is a young Roman Catholic Sister of Mercy who teaches male candidates for the priesthood a local seminary course in Church History.)

We debated the idea of tying to some nationwide social action network. By mid-afternoon scepticism had surfaced: Was it really useful for our local purposes to share nationally in the huge task of designing "the social mission of the church for the last quarter of the 20th century"?

Saturday's group of 15 was weighted heavily with pro-women's ordination people, as might have been predicted. Nobody seemed aligned negatively — even neutrally — on that issue.

Four hours of discussion allowed other concerns to be discussed before the group. Each person around the table "showed and told" how "social mission" worked (or didn't work) where he or she lived — the terrible neglect of the elderly in North Hills, suburban depersonalism, the powerlessness in churches or church leaders, or on the other hand too much power in corporations. It was almost electric how quickly we reached agreement on the "sin" in Pittsburgh's national and multinational corporations.

Then our indignation turned to some despair — our problems being rooted in money, or our own moneylessness, why anyone struggles on the "idea level." A diocese won't move far from its money supply, we implied. It was either captive on the one hand, or helplessly diverse on the other. "The Episcopal Church survived the Civil War in this country without schism," someone said, "but maybe that just means it couldn't take a stand!"

The air had been pretty well filled with candor, enough that we seemed ready for the question: Will we become part of a national Church and Society Network? The answer was "yes," and we would make an effort to have groups like our own from the five other dioceses meet again in Pittsburgh overnight before the end of May.

That was the lesser part of our answer. More important, one sensed that perhaps enough had

people I used to work with in the Church, and I quickly reverted to my old manner of dealing with them. As I sipped from a cup of tea, I ricocheted from one person to the next receiving their stiff, little compliments on the service, some referring to it as a sermon, some a funeral, one a liturgy, and one even calling it a Mass. An old woman — I have no idea who she was — was particularly enthusiastic. "That was a good service. It was so strong and full of faith," she said. "Even if it wasn't Catholic, I know it was right, and nobody can tell me different. I'm glad Joe had a priest to talk to at the end. It makes us all feel better about everything."

When I returned home late in the afternoon, I had a bit of a headache. I swallowed a couple aspirins. Then I went upstairs and showered and changed into beat-up trousers, sneakers, and a sweat shirt with the sleeves cut off. I fixed myself with a beer and a bologna and cheese sandwich, familiar food unlike the strange stuff which confronted me at Mrs. Hlinka's, and I sat down in the living room to watch football. The Eastern games I normally watched were over. It was like the second half of a double-header, UCLA against somebody. It didn't matter who, really. It was mindless, secular, and comforting.

Henry N. Williams: writer-producer, WITF-TV, Hershey, Pa.

Network Reports

Network Coming Events

New York — Connecticut Region, April 25, 26.
Central East Region, Wilmington, May 9, 10.
Pennsylvania - Virginia, Pittsburgh, May 25, 26.
Central South, Kanuga, TN, June 6, 7, 8.

happened that Saturday to warrant meeting again. We would meet April 13 and one person would present a paper on the future of ministry to the hospital communities located in the eastern end of Pittsburgh's Allegheny County.—*David Van Dusen, Greensburg, Pa.*

Louisville Hunger Conference

The issue underlying world hunger is global justice. This was the key emphasis at the Episcopal World Hunger Training Conference in Louisville March 16-20. More than 50 laity and clergy from the four eastern provinces of the Episcopal church came to be trained as members of provincial task forces on world and domestic hunger.

Some of what they heard was painfully familiar. Arthur Simon, director of "Bread for the World," the religious lobby for effective legislation on hunger, said, "Hunger is a child with shriveled limbs and a swollen belly . . . the grief of parents . . . a person gone blind for lack of vitamin A." Some was less familiar but starkly realistic and believable. Steven Brooks of Food Research and Action Center described a mother in Choctaw County, Mississippi, who had not had milk for her baby in five days.

The Rev. Norman Faramelli, Chairman of the Inter-Provincial Task Force, presented what was to many a new concept. "What we are talking about is the maldistribution of resources. It is not too many people or a shortage of food, or bad weather, or the will of God." It is fundamentally a question of nations being unable to buy the food they need.

Conferees, many of whom came with ideas that the answer to world hunger lay in pence cans or giving up meat a few days a week, had their eyes opened. They heard soft-spoken Navajo Indians speaking of deprivation. A young woman from Appalachia asked why huge pieces of strip-mining machinery could be brought in

over the hills by helicopter, while critically ill residents had to be carried out by lengthy ambulance rides along the tortuous roads. Latin Americans spoke with passion about the inextricable tie between American economic and military powers and Latin American elitist governments in the dispensing of American "aid."

Episcopal conference-goers often seem to be expected to leave at home their theology and especially their Bibles. Not so this one. Worship, theological reflection and Bible study took a major part and seemed to undergird the concern for the poor and the oppressed.

The conference was designed not to force participants into false either/or choices: authentic development vs. food aid; domestic vs. international poverty; personal lifestyle vs. political action; piety vs. social involvement. Faramelli made a strong case for a pluralistic response from parishes and individuals: liturgy, Bible study, dieting/fasting/lifestyle, Presiding Bishop's Fund, and strong political/economic action.

The question is, what next?

The provincial teams will train and support task forces in each diocese. The hope is that there be a task force in virtually every parish in the country. The objective is to institutionalize this concern, so it does not fade away as a passing fad.

The Episcopal Church is generally not used to functioning by provinces, and it seemed clear that some provinces might have trouble getting it together. Faramelli, looking back over the Louisville and Denver training conferences with some satisfaction said, "The easy part is over. Now the hard part begins: building this into the Church's program." Ruth Cheney, one of the most durable and still "alive" members of the Church Center staff, was quoted as saying, "I have lived long enough to see three programs begun with a great flourish and then allowed to die. This issue is too important for us to allow this to happen."—*Allen L. Bartlett*

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