

Some thoughts on the Catholic action RENEW

What we need, among other things, is less negativism and ridicule of the pre-Vatican II Church in the sermons of some younger priests . After all, it is today's middle aged people, educated during those times — taught to revere the symbols they, admittedly, could not properly understand — who still have sufficient faith left to wish to "renew".

Can we be so sure that in, say, 30 years, the same will be true about our younger generation ? A generation we feed, often even from the pulpit, with shallow, therefore easier to understand, symbols wrapped in plastic words of some momentary fad in sociology or psychology, that comes to-day and goes to-morrow? Surely, I know much more about computers than my father ever did. But does that necessarily make me a better educated person? And does the same not apply to temporary (usually second-hand) interpretations of moral and doctrinal values of the Church? Because the present controversy in the Church is not so much between the two generations of authentic theological thinkers, but rather between the two generations of their overzealous adherents, who seek comfortable easy-to-understand and easy-to-follow (morally or intellectually) formulae to which they wish to reduce our understanding of God and His will.

We of the not-so-young generation remember priests who in their sermons were obsessed with the "sins of the flesh", and we often wondered whether the poor person was not, in a certain sense, mentally sick. Today we hear priests (in the Western world) obsessed in their sermons with the evils of the individual, including "individual salvation", often condemned because of a too naive interpretation of Teilhard . Are we so sure that it is the right thing to replace the function of the House of the Lord, which used to be a place where the individual person came to worship the personal God, by a function that is being referred to as "community celebration", that is, a kind of collective Ego worship ? Is it not that because our God presents himself to us as a person (in distinction to the God or gods of oriental religions) that He asks us to love our neighbour (i.e. the individual person) rather than our neighbourhood ? It has been a tradition in our Church, to say the least, that Christ died for each one of us not for the bulk of us. And when He was dying the only reference He made to any community was when He prayed for those who did not know what they were doing — His direct address was to three completely different individuals.

Those of us, who have lived through both modern versions of the pseudo-religious fervour for the supremacy of the collective over the individual, the community over the person, namely nazism and communism, have come to love this country — and indirectly the whole Anglo-Saxon

tradition - for its respect for the individual person. This trait in the Anglo-Saxons' national character is a gift from God, as much as the delicate sense for community among the Orthodox Greeks or Russians ('sobornost') is their gift from God.

It would be wrong to try to replace this natural gift by a plastic replica of something which requires a completely different cultural environment. Instead, I think, we in Australia should try to make the best we can of this gift of God : not to replace the emphasis on the individual person by some verbal community ritual, but to emphasize that not only I but also my neighbour is an individual, with the same feelings, rights and dignity in the eyes of the God who sent his only begotten Son to save his person as well as mine. .

It is true that the Church is "just a community" only as much as it is true that the Eucharist is "just a piece of bread": we do not worship the bread as such and we should not worship the community as such. In both cases it is Christ's presence in these worldly manifestations that we worship. We are not asked to see the Lord in any piece of bread as we are not asked to see the Lord in any community. But we are asked to see Him in any individual human being ...

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G. Virsik