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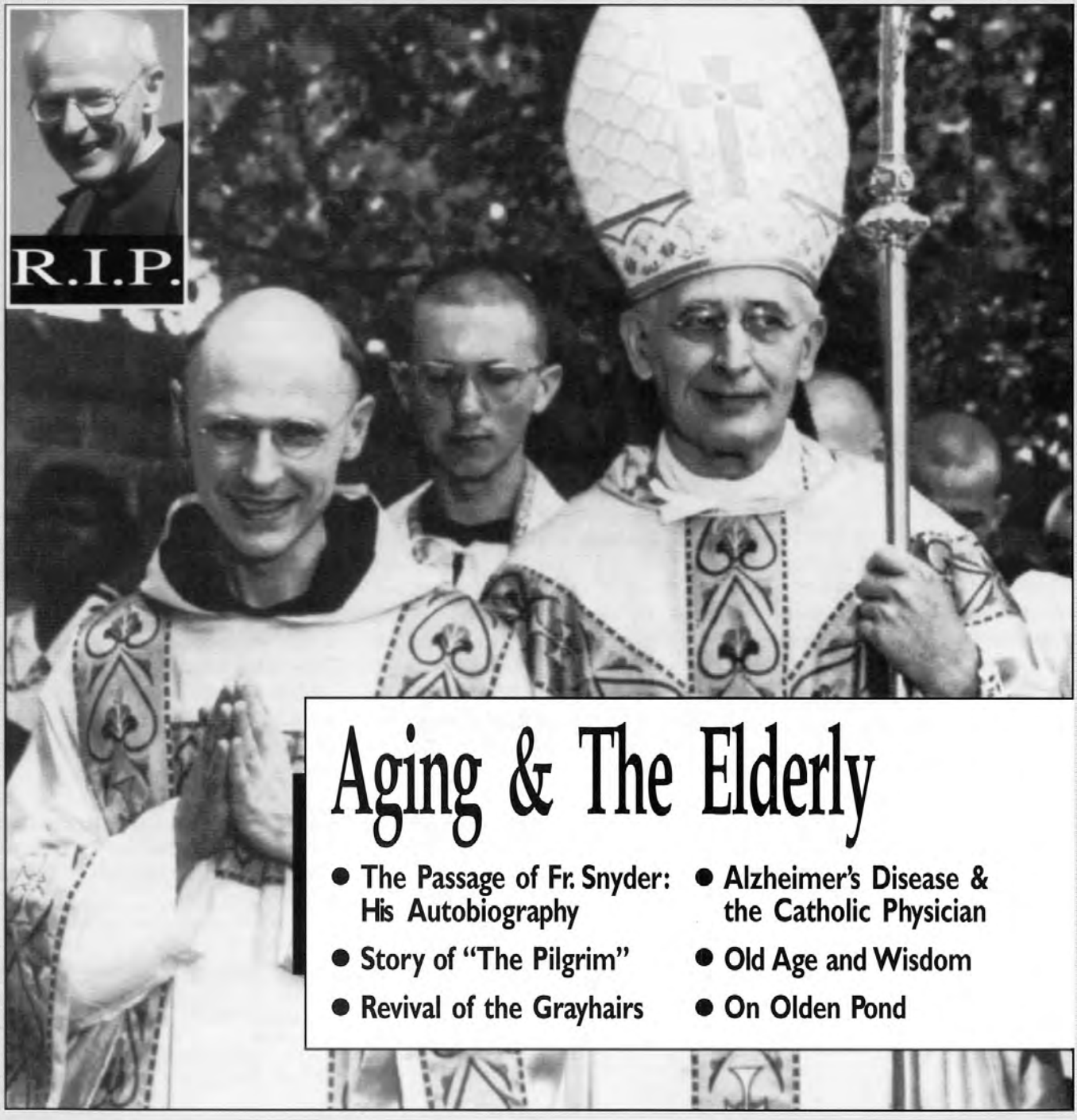
The Angelus

"Instaurare omnia in Christo"

A Journal of Roman Catholic Tradition



Aging & The Elderly

- The Passage of Fr. Snyder: His Autobiography
- Story of "The Pilgrim"
- Revival of the Grayhairs
- Alzheimer's Disease & the Catholic Physician
- Old Age and Wisdom
- On Olden Pond

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Motto of Pope Saint Pius X

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"To publish Catholic journals and place them in the hands of honest men is not enough. It is necessary to spread them as far as possible that they may be read by all, and especially by those whom Christian charity demands we should tear away from the poisonous sources of evil literature."
–Pope Saint Pius X

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On our Cover: Rev. Fr. Urban Snyder, former monk of Gethsemani Abbey, died January 25, 1995. (See related stories on pp. 10, 22, 24) This picture was taken at his ordination to the diaconate by Most Rev. Archbishop John A. Floersh of Louisville, KY in the mid-1940's.

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"Amen, amen I say to thee, when thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old,...another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldst not" (John 21:18).

Says Marion Mitchell Stancioff, "These words of Jesus to Peter strike the aging with shock." The young, too. All of us who are too busy about our personal independence are stung by the suggestion of it coming to an end someday. She adds, "Not only our physical life but our spiritual life as well demands so much strength, decision, initiative, and responsibility that these qualities in course of time seem almost an end in themselves." Then, one day, it happens. These qualities begin to become obstacles. "We thought we had learned to handle life and now suddenly we must learn to let ourselves be handled by it. *'Another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not.'"*

Mrs. Stancioff continues, "Old age is the natural substitute for supernatural detachment. It submits us against our will to that diminishment which we were unwilling to accept. We would not kill our appetite for things, so we suffer the gradual decay of our appetite for everything. What we would not give up for ***God's*** sake, He tears away from us for our ***own***."

God's work of "destruction" to bring us humbly to Him is a "process of stripping the old," Mrs. Stancioff says. The process happens on all levels by loss of position, by a taking away of goods; a "stripping" on the social, physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual planes. God doesn't spare us on any plane. The ruin most glaringly strikes us in the old person suffering with Alzheimer's Disease. Dr. Gabriel de Erausquin, M.D., discusses this ultimate "stripping" in ***Old Age, Dementia, and the Catholic Physician***.

In our inhuman age, man has added unnecessary elements of agony to the "social stripping" of the aged by virtually denying death and its herald, age. It hasn't happened overnight! Old people began to lose ground long ago. Their social importance began to slip when writing was invented. In earlier times, the old were the only recorders, the living archives of their families, tribes, nations and of the Church. They were Mankind's official memory and data-base of its wisdom. Dr. Frederick Wilhelmsen reflects on the consequences of contemporary society's refusal to honor age for what it is in ***Old Age & Wisdom.***

Viewing themselves as rusty machines in a mechanist world, it is natural that the old cease to respect themselves. They become apologetic for their declining existence, or, if they have money, spend it putting on a show of youthfulness. ***Revival of the Grayhairs*** reminds the elderly they have at least two things youth doesn't have: *experience* and *time*. "How comely is judgement for a gray head, and for ancients to know counsel" (Ecclus. 25:6)! This articles reprimands the eternal juveniles who abdicate their function and dignity, and, gives creative advice to the duty-conscious. George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans) has written an easily Catholicized "examination of conscience" for the grandma or grandpa praying to become a member of the communion of saints:

> O, may I join the choir invisible
> Of those immortal dead who live again
> In minds made better by their presence; live
> In pulses stirred to generosity,
> In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
> Of miserable aims that end with self,
> In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
> And with their mild persistence urge men's minds
> To vaster issues....
>
> May I reach
> That purest heaven–be to other souls
> The cup of strength in some great agony,
> Enkindle generous ardor, feed pure love,
> Beget the smiles that have no cruelty,
> Be the sweet presence of good diffused,
> And in diffusion ever more intense!
> So shall I join the choir invisible,
> Whose music is the gladness of the world.

Better said, for the immediate means, are St. Paul's words to Titus:

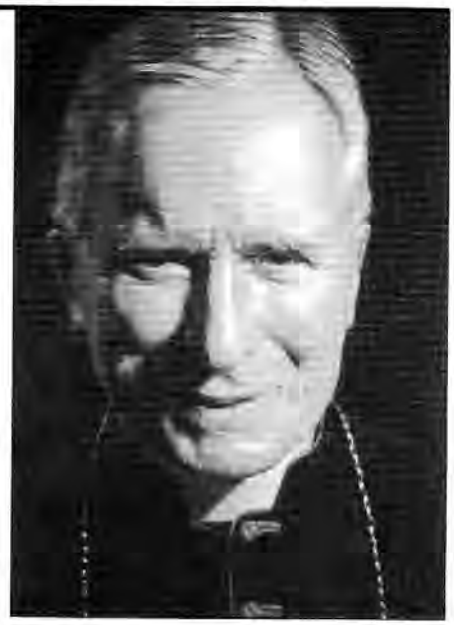
> That the aged men be sober, chaste, prudent, sound in faith, in love, in patience. The aged women, in like manner, in holy attire, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teaching well: that they may teach the young women to be wise, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, sober, having care of the house, gentle, obedient to their husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. (Titus 2:2-5)

By extension, we can say, "Youth, listen!" For, there is a counterbalance to St. Paul's caution to the young bishop, Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth," (I Tim. 4:12), and that is, "Despise not a man in his old age; for we also shall become old" (Ecclus. 8:7). It is appropriate to feature in this issue the heretofore unpublished autobiography of Rev. Fr. Urban Snyder, who passed from this life at 83 (January 25, 1995), one of the classic "old men," a wise friend of and fighter for Catholic Tradition. With the passage of Fr. Snyder, the Church has lost some of its wisdom, but not before "The Kentucky Pilgrim" shared much of it–like a St. Paul–with ***his*** Timothy, that is, Fr. Timothy Pfeiffer, who has written the short memoir herein.

Instaurare omnia in Christo.

Fr. Kenneth Novak

The Revolution in the Church



The third excerpt from a conference given by Archbishop Lefebvre at Montreal, Canada in 1982.

In effect, the battle began immediately, from the very first days of the Council. Card. Ottaviani had presented the list of members who had belonged to the preparatory commissions, leaving full freedom for each to choose those he wanted. It was obvious that we could not all know one another, since each one came from his own diocese. How could one possibly know the 2,500 bishops of the world? We were asked to vote for members of the commissions of the Council. But whom could we choose? We did not know the bishops from South America or South Africa or India...

Card. Ottaviani thought that Rome's choices for the preparatory commissions could give an indication to the Council Fathers. It was in fact quite normal to propose these.

Card. Lienart arose and said, "We object to this way of doing things. We ask for forty-eight hours to reflect, so that we can get to know better those who could make up the different commissions. This is to exert pressure on the judgment of the Fathers. We do not accept it."

The Council had begun only two days previously and already there was a violent opposition between the cardinals. What had happened?

During these forty-eight hours the liberal cardinals had already prepared lists made out from all the countries of the world. They distributed these in the letter boxes of all the Council Fathers. We had, therefore, all received a list proposing the members of such and such a commission. Many said: "After all, why not? I do not know them. Since the list is already ready, we have simply to make use of it." Forty-eight hours later it was the liberals' list which was in front. But it did not receive the two-thirds of the votes required by the Council rules.

What then would the Pope do? Would Pope John XXIII make an exception to the rules of the Council, or would he apply them? Clearly the liberal cardinals were afraid that he might apply them, and so they ran to the Pope and said to him: "Listen, we have more than half the votes, nearly 60%. You cannot refuse that. We cannot keep going like this and hold another election. We will never be done with it. This is clearly the will of the majority of the Council, and we have simply to accept it." And Pope John XXIII accepted. From this beginning all the members of the Council commissions were chosen by the liberal wing. It is easy to imagine what an enormous influence this had on the Council.

I am sure Pope John XXIII died prematurely because of what he saw at the Council, although he had thought that at the end of a few months everything would be done with. It was to be a council of three months. Then all would say goodbye and go home happy for having met one another at Rome, and for having had a nice little meeting.

He discovered that the Council was to be a world in itself, a world of continual clashes. No text came from the first session of the Council. Pope John XXIII was overwhelmed by this, and I am persuaded that this hastened his death. It has even been said that on his deathbed he said: "Stop the Council; stop the Council."

Pope Paul VI and The Liberals

Pope Paul VI came along. It is obvious that he gave his support to the liberal wing. Why was that?

From the very beginning of his pontificate, during the second session of the Council, he immediately named four moderators. The four moderators were to direct the Coun-

cil instead of the ten presidents who had presided during the first session. The presidents, one of whom had presided over one meeting and then the second and then the third, sat at a table higher than the others. But they were to become honorary presidents. The four moderators became the true presidents of the Council.

Who were these moderators? Card. Dopfner of Munich was one. He was very progressive indeed and very ecumenical. Card. Suenens, whom the entire world knows along with his charismatics and who has given conferences in favor of the marriage of priests, was another. Card. Lercaro who is known for his philocommunism and whose Vicar General had been enrolled as a member of the Communist Party was a third. Finally, there was Card. Agagianian, who represented somewhat the traditional wing, if I can say so.

Card. Agagianian was a very discreet and self-effacing man. Consequently he had no real influence on the Council. But the three others accomplished their task with drums beating. They constantly brought together the liberal cardinals, which gave considerable authority to the liberal wing of the Council.

Clearly the traditional cardinals and bishops were from this very moment put aside and despised.

When poor Card. Ottaviani, who was blind, started to speak, booing could be heard amongst the young bishops when he did not finish at the end of the ten minutes allocated to him. Thus did they make him understand that they had enough of listening to him. He had to stop; it was frightful. This venerable Card., who was honored throughout Rome and who had had an enormous influence on the Holy Church, who was Prefect of the Holy Office, which is not a small function, was obliged to stop. It was scandalous to see how the traditionalists were treated.

Msgr. Staffa (since named Cardinal), who is very energetic, was silenced by the Council moderators. These were unbelievable things.

Revolution In The Church

This is what went on at the Council. It is obvious that all the Council documents and texts were influenced by the liberal cardinals and Commissions. It is hardly astonishing that we have such ambiguous texts, which favor so many changes and even a true revolution in the Church.

Could we have done anything, we who represented the traditional wing of the bishops and cardinals? Frankly speaking, we could do little. We were 250 who favored the maintaining of Tradition, and who opposed such major changes in the Church as false renewal, false ecumenism, false collegiality. We opposed all these things. These 250 bishops, clearly, brought some weight to bear and on certain occasions forced texts to be modified. Thus the evil was somewhat limited.

But we could not succeed in preventing certain false opinions from being adopted, especially in the Schema on Religious Liberty, whose text was redone five times. Five times the same opinion was brought forward. We opposed it on each occasion. There were always 250 votes against. Consequently, Pope Paul VI asked that two small sentences be added to the text, saying that there is nothing in this text which is contrary to the traditional teaching of the Church and that the Church remains always the true and the only Church of Christ.

Then the Spanish bishops in particular said: "Since the Pope has made this statement there is no longer any problem. There is nothing against tradition." If these things are contradictory, then this little phrase contradicts everything which is in the texts. It is a contradictory schema. We cannot accept it. Finally there remained, if I remember well, only 74 bishops against. It is the only schema which met such opposition, but 74 out 2,500 are few indeed!

Thus ended the Council. We should not be astonished at the reforms which have been introduced since. Since then, everything is the history of liberalism. The liberals were victorious within the Council, for they demanded that Paul VI grant them places within the Roman Congregations. And, in fact, the important places were given to the progressive clergy. As soon as a Card. died or an occasion presented itself, Pope Paul VI would put aside traditional cardinals, immediately replacing them with liberal ones.

Thus it is that Rome was occupied by the liberals. This is a fact which cannot be denied. Nor can it be denied that the reforms of the Council were reforms which breathe the spirit of Ecumenism, and which are, quite simply, protestant, neither more nor less.

The Liturgical Reform

The most serious of the consequences was the liturgical reform. It was accomplished, as everybody knows, by a well known priest, Bugnini, who had prepared it long in advance. Already in 1955, Fr. Bugnini had asked Msgr. Pintonello, General Chaplain of the Italian army, who had spent much time in Germany during the occupation, to translate protestant liturgical texts. For Fr. Bugnini did not know German.

It was Msgr. Pintonello himself who told me that he had translated the protestant liturgical books for Fr. Bugnini, who at that time was but an insignificant member of a liturgical commission. He was nothing. Afterwards he became professor of liturgy at the Lateran. Pope John XXIII made him leave on account of his modernism and his progressivism. Hence, surprise, surprise, and he is found again as President of the Commission for Liturgical Reform. This is, all the same, unbelievable.

I had the occasion to see for

Fr. Bugnini, with much confidence, explained what the Normative Mass would be; this will be changed, that will be changed and we will put in place another Offertory. We will be able to choose between different canons. We will be able to reduce the communion prayers. We will be able to have several different formats for the beginning of Mass. We will be able to say the Mass in the vernacular tongue. We looked at one another saying to ourselves: "But it's not possible!"

myself what influence Fr. Bugnini had. One wonders how such a thing as this could have happened at Rome. At that time, immediately after the Council, I was Superior General of the Congregation of the Fathers of the Holy Ghost and we had a meeting of the Superiors General at Rome. We had asked Fr. Bugnini to explain to us what his New Mass was, for this was not at all a small event. Immediately after the Council we heard of the Normative Mass, the New Mass, the Novus Ordo. What did all this mean? It had not been spoken of at the Council. What had happened? And so we asked Fr. Bugnini to come and explain himself to the 84 Superiors General who were united together, amongst whom I consequently was.

Fr. Bugnini, with much confidence, explained what the Normative Mass would be; this will be changed, that will be changed and we will put in place another Offertory. We will be able to choose between different canons. We will be able to reduce the communion prayers. We will be able to have several different formats for the beginning of Mass. We will be able to say the Mass in the vernacular tongue. We looked at one another saying to ourselves: "But it's not possible!"

He spoke absolutely, as if there had never been a Mass in the Church before him. He spoke of his Normative Mass as of a new invention.

Personally I was myself so stunned that I remained mute, although I generally speak freely when it is a question of opposing those with whom I am not in agreement. I could not utter a word. How could it be possible for this man before me to be entrusted with the entire reform of the Catholic liturgy, the entire reform of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, of the sacraments, of the Breviary, and of all our prayers? Where are we going? Where is the Church going?

Two Superiors General had the courage to speak out. One of them asked Fr. Bugnini: "Is this an active participation, that is a bodily participation, that is to say with vocal prayers, or is it a spiritual participation? In any case you have so much spoken of the participation of the faithful that it seems you can no longer justify Mass celebrated without the faithful. Your entire Mass has been fabricated around the participation of the faithful. We Benedictines celebrate our Masses without the assistance of the faithful. Does this mean that we must discontinue our private Masses, since we do not have faithful to participate in them?"

I repeat to you exactly that which Fr. Bugnini said. I have it still in my ears, so much did it strike me: "To speak truthfully we didn't think of that," he said! Afterwards another arose and said: "Reverend Father, you have said that we will suppress this and we will suppress that, that we will replace this thing by that and always by shorter prayers. I have the impression that your new Mass could be said in ten or twelve minutes or at the most a quarter of an hour. This is not reasonable. This is not respectful towards such an act of the Church." Well, this is what he replied: "We can always add something." Is this for real? I heard it myself. If somebody had told me the story I would perhaps have doubted it, but I heard it myself.

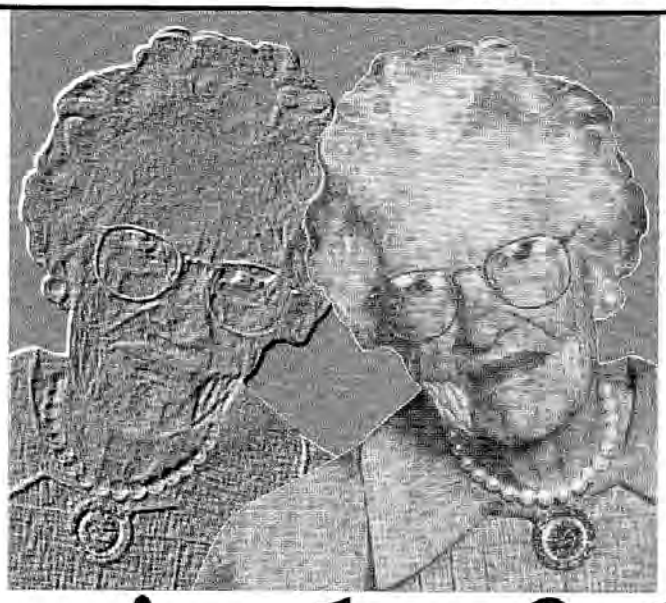
Afterwards, at the time at which this Normative Mass began to be put into practice, I was so disgusted that we met with some priests and theologians in a small meeting. From it came the "Brief Critical Study," which was taken to Card. Ottaviani. I presided at that small meeting. We said to ourselves: "We must go and find the Cardinals. We cannot allow this to happen without reacting."

So I myself went to find the Secretary of State, Card. Cicognani, and I said to him: "Your Eminence, you are not going to allow this to get through, are you? It's not possible. What is this New Mass? It is a revolution in the Church, a revolution in the liturgy."

Card. Cicognani, who was the Secretary of State of Pope Paul VI, placed his head between his hands and said to me: "Oh Monsigneur, I know well. I am in full agreement with you; but what can I do? Fr. Bugnini goes in to the office of the Holy Father and makes him sign what he wants." It was the Card. Secretary of State who told me this! Therefore the Secretary of State, the number two person in the Church after the Pope himself, was placed in a position of inferiority with respect to Fr. Bugnini. He could enter into the Pope's office when he wanted and make him sign what he wanted. Ω

(to be continued)

BY ANDREW LISLE



Revival of the Grayhairs

You're dying. Well, we all are. Maybe you're just closer. But now, you've got time and experience youth hasn't. So give them! (Young people, listen!)

Age. It comes already to everyone now reading these words, simply because there was a time in your memory when you were too young to read; you have since aged beyond that point. Age is the herald of Death, and like his master, inexorable.

We start with our First Communion and Confession; then Confirmation. After graduation from high school and/or college, the weddings begin, our own quite possibly among them. Then comes the round of Baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations, graduations, and at last more Baptisms. And then, the funerals, proceeding until our own.

With the increase in life expectancy, due to medical advancement, old age is becoming ever more common. Because we have a diminishing birthrate at the same time, however, it becomes ever more difficult to see how the elderly will be provided for. As the size of families continues to shrink, there are fewer offspring to contribute to their upkeep, even at the same time that the tax base for Social Security is eroding. What then should be the role of the aged? How should the younger folk deal with them? How should they deal with the youngsters?

We should look first at the role of the aged in Christendom. Age then was considered to be a blessing–an understandable view when the life expectancy was in the fifties, due to plagues, warfare, and the like. Then, the aged were more than just weak white-haired folk. They were the memory of the community, and a repository of its traditions. Since the middle-aged were employed making a living from the fields and forests, it was left to the

elderly to pass on to the children the people's notion of how life ought to be led, their folk-tales and songs, and their religious attitudes. The very name, "village elder" summons up a picture of wisdom. While today we use the phrase "old wives' tales" rather scornfully, the fact remains that such tales were taken quite seriously once upon a time, and had enough truth in them to last.

Part of this veneration was the gift of Catholicism, which in many places elevated the stature of the elderly even as it did for women. Yet there was also a very practical side to having a high regard for the words of the aged, as this story from Latvia:

> Long ago, before the Letts (as the people of that country are called) received the light of Faith, it was their custom to save needed food supplies by leaving the elderly out in the deep forest to die of exposure or be devoured by wolves. If a man could no longer work, he must no longer eat. Thus it happened that a man was bringing his aged father on a sleigh out to the woods, accompanied by his own eight-year old son. When they reached the appointed place, the man, whose heart was already breaking, turned to leave his father without a word. But the eight-year old said, "Oh, Father! Do not leave the sleigh behind! I will need it for you when your time comes!"
>
> At that, the man realized how terrible was this custom. They brought the old man back and took care of him despite his inability to work. They concealed this from the neighbors. It came to pass that that part of the world was hit by a famine. Every day food became more scarce. From giving his father a slice of wheat bread in the morning, the man was forced to give him ever coarser rye bread. At last, the day came when he had nothing for the old man but a slice of barley bread, rough and dry. His father said "I cannot eat this; my teeth are too poor." "But Father, it is all we have. When it is gone, we will have no food at all."
>
> The old man thought a bit and said, "Take all the thatching off the roof. Thresh it, and you should find some grain yet remaining in it." The middle-aged man did so, and found enough seeds to plant half and use the rest for food. He told his neighbors, who all did the same. The village was saved, and ever since that time old age has been held in great honor among the Letts.

So, indeed it was everywhere in days gone by. In Grimm's fairy tales, for instance, every old person encountered by the hero is called "mother" or "father." Great stress is always laid on the need for due respect to be given the aged, who are inevitably sought out for advice.

But that was long ago. Today, once the 2.5 children grow up and leave (assuming, of course, that the parents have not divorced and confused the situation with several half- and step-siblings), the likelihood is that they will move far from their parents. The elderly couple themselves (again, assuming that they have remained together) will very likely leave the old home in which they raised their family, and move to housing for "active seniors." This may very well be in a seniors' colony in some place like Arizona or Florida. The "residents" spend their remaining years playing golf or taking classes, and often trying to act much younger than they are. All the time their lives are led with a minimum of interaction with their families. They dress like kids, they attempt to romance like kids. Perhaps at Christmas or Thanksgiving they see the children and the grandchildren. But for all the effect such folk have on their progeny, they might as well not see them at all. Of course, less prosperous folk might well live in senior housing in the city of their last residence. Being much poorer, and possibly lacking any family at all, their lives are not silly, just dismal. I have stood in the supermarket watching an old lady push a cart filled with cans of dog food and bottles of Scotch. I do not think she had a pet.

Whatever the case, as age continues its work on us, we become weaker and sicker. The usual solution is a convalescent home. These are frightening places, filled with elderly who have lapsed into senility, or whose physical capacities have deserted them. Visited now and then by family, if they are lucky, these folk lead a strange half-life, surrounded by strangers and regrets.

What, then, to do about all of this? As with the other major societal ills that afflict us, there is no immediate answer. But an individual can do a great deal. For starters, the elderly need to realize that they have two great gifts: experience and time. It is hard for them to see how quickly the events of the past are buried in the popular consciousness. For instance, to college-age kids today, the days of Jimmy Carter are the dead past. Where does this leave Pearl Harbor, Korea, the Depression, D-Day, etc.?

We live in a throw-away society, where fashions and fads come and go faster and faster. Like George Orwell's *1984*, our corporate memories are continually being altered. For example, how many supporters of abortion today can remember that before 1973 they thought it murder? Older folks can do a lot to remind the young of the way things actually were in days gone by. This is more important than ever as the media form our culture ever more in its own image.

The elderly, however, are as much affected by events as anyone else. When an older person finds himself saying such things as "Well, you have to move with the times," or "Things have changed," or "You have to face it, people are different since I was young, and you just have to go along with it," we should ask, "Why?" ***Why*** should the person in question tolerate something he was taught was wrong? But moreover, he must be able to explain why it is wrong. The younger generation takes little or nothing on the word of authority anymore; the responsibility for that lies with the older generations who debased authority. The

sad fact remains that most elderly are as cut off from the traditions of our Faith and culture as anyone else. It is true that no one knows their Catholic Faith as well as they should, but the elderly (too many of whom spend time on trips to Las Vegas, playing golf, filling out sweepstakes forms, pouring over the daily paper and the NYSE quotes, watching Oprah, "As The World Turns" and "Wheel of Fortune") should know better. If Grandma and Grandpa spent some time with *The Liturgical Year* or some other great Catholic classic and then "mediated" it, so to speak, to their younger relations who do not have the time to do their own research, they would be doing them a great favor.

If Grandma and Grandpa immigrated from a people who had a Catholic culture and remember customs and stories from their youth or childhood, they should pass them on. Unfortunately, because life and assimilation in this country are what they are, it is too often the case that grandparents are embarrassed to do so, or, know no more about these things than their younger descendants. If so, it is time to learn. Pick up a book like *Customs & Traditions of the Catholic Family* (available from Angelus Press. Price: $7.00) which reviews the religious customs of Mexican, Slovak, Polish, Irish, Italian, Portuguese, Louisiana French, and Kansas Germano-Russian Catholics! Find out what your people did on feastdays and the like. See what might be incorporated into your present life, particularly on those holidays when the kids are likeliest to visit. Learn which of Our Lady's titles and which saints and devotions are most popular among your people and incorporate them into your own religious life. Find an ethnic cookbook and experiment with it, or, a book of ethnic folktales and tell them to the grandchildren. Study up on the history of your country of origin, especially its Catholic chapters, and your family genealogy. In a word, try to make yourself the kind of village elder or old wife you would have been. Make yourself a repository of tradition.

This brings us to another point: ***acting*** one's age–and ***dressing*** it. Society encourages one great attribute next to and as part of youth–sloppiness. Such casual gear as jeans and T-shirts are the order of the day for man and woman, young and old alike, no matter what the occasion. In truth, it looks silly on most of us and grotesque on the aged–most clothes meant to favor the young do so anyway. There was a time, particularly before World War II, when people strove for an elegance of proportion, regardless of their financial ability or social status. "Clothes make the man" is a valid maxim. While the flight to sloppiness was given a terrific start by World War II, it was the 60's which gave this flight its ideological content. It is not that a jacket and tie or a nice dress make the individual a better person, but it is a signal that he or she respects him or herself as well as others enough to attempt to present the best image possible. It is like dressing for church–You show God respect and you show that you consider yourself worth respecting. So when an old lady sighs, "My mother never used to go downtown without her hat and gloves," or a man says, "Time was when you wouldn't think of going out to dinner in a restaurant without wearing a jacket and tie," we should ask, "Why don't you anymore?" The whole tone of your immediate environment will be uplifted and you'll give your grandchildren a good example.

Similarly, let us examine our conscience regarding our behavior. Discourtesy, foul language, and rudeness have become a part of society in the same manner as sloppy clothes. Harken back to your childhood when you were taught that such things were not permitted ladies and gentlemen. Politeness and courtesy are hallmarks of Christendom. Give the youngsters a reason to be proud of you.

Which brings us to yet another point. Many older folks complain, "My children and grandkids don't listen to me or take me seriously." Be sure that you are worth listening to! We are influenced always by what we admire; children listen to their peers rather than their elders because they admire them more. So if the young are to listen to you, you must be the most admirable person you can be. This means thinking beyond one's own convenience. Trips to Vegas and through the TV channels might be more relaxing than poring over old books or thinking creatively about the next time you will host your family; it is easier to throw on slacks and a polo shirt than a suit–and you feel more comfortable in the former. But it is just as much easier for the young people in your life to disregard you. Their attention and respect must be won, and once won, maintained.

That may be fine for those with families, but what of those without? What about those of the elderly who live alone, without relations near? The loneliness of today's old age can only be staved off in one productive way: volunteer work. Every parish has a certain number of jobs that must be done–whether it be school, or catechism, or daycare, or festivals, or whatever. These offer the senior a great opportunity to mingle not only with his own age group, but with folk of all ages–to create a sense of family, as it were, and to pass on what skills and wisdom he or she can to the younger generations.

So far, we have dealt with the responsibilities of age to youth; let us turn the tables. We get impatient with their crankiness and unreasonableness; we are bored with their stories and interminable needs. As they get more feeble, they become more inconvenient and whiny. In truth, they are an annoying proposition altogether. ***Wrong!...***

They are in fact the key to liberation from the trap of "today."

Older people are a living link with history. Much like the Faith itself though on a smaller scale, they can help us transcend our present time and its strangling self-absorption. In this way, they can help us form an independent identity, not so closely tied to whatever happens to be happening just this moment or just this year. Listen carefully to what the elders have to say. Like the old Latvian gentleman in the tale, you may learn something. Older people have been around a while, and paying attention may save you from having to reinvent the wheel.

But it might be objected that nothing is so boring as hearing Grandma's story about her first date again (you know, when Henry McGillicuddy picked her up in his dad's Pierce-Arrow?), or the classroom visit of the German-speaking bishop when she was a schoolgirl, or Grandpa's story about how he helped great-grandpa slaughter Boris the pig on that rainy day in June. No doubt they are ten times as long in the telling as they were in the doing. But these ritual retellings of a minor anecdote can become sources of information all on their own. Grandma and Grandpa actually know much more than they're telling. Remember that in them you have a time machine, and can find out all sorts of things about the era in which they lived. This in turn gives you (or your children) a depth, a strength, which you could not have otherwise, and something against which to evaluate modern ways.

Much can be taken from the ways in which older folk celebrated to help in your own family celebrations of Christmas or Bob's graduation from high school. To the degree that they're able, they ought to be given some part in the care and education of the young ones. But there is more involved here. Older folks teach one (for better or worse) how to age oneself. Aware of their failing powers of mind or body, they often reveal their fear and insecurity by lashing out at those they love. On the one hand, one must be loving enough to bear with them, but firm enough to make them recognize what they're doing. Always, however, it must be kept in mind that they require honor and respect. Their fears center, ultimately, around the same thing we all fear: Death. In the dissolution of the elderly before our eyes, we see our own fate.

As long as it can possibly be done, the elderly should live with or near their families–both to pass on wisdom, and to be needed and useful. The great enemy of the soul is selfishness. Just as pushing off our older family members to homes can be an expression of selfishness in ourselves, so too can they, living alone, give themselves up to it. There is nothing sadder than to see a man once great–an academic or attorney, say–squabbling with another old person over a scrap of cookie. The reason why old age brings out childishness in so many people is because it strips off the learned veneer of manners and adulthood, leaving exposed human nature in all its meanness. But continued interaction with the young helps not only to give young people a sense of balance and proportion, it does so for the older person also. It is much better that such a one teach his grandson the catechism or tell the story of his first deer hunt, than that he brood on the times when, as a young man, he was cheated out of a job promotion–which, being human, is very much the way his mind might work if given no other stimulation.

But what if Grandma's health simply won't allow her staying at home? What if she has to have constant nursing, or is a danger to herself or others? If she is admitted to a care residence, the place must be as near as possible and family members must try to spend as much time with her as they can.

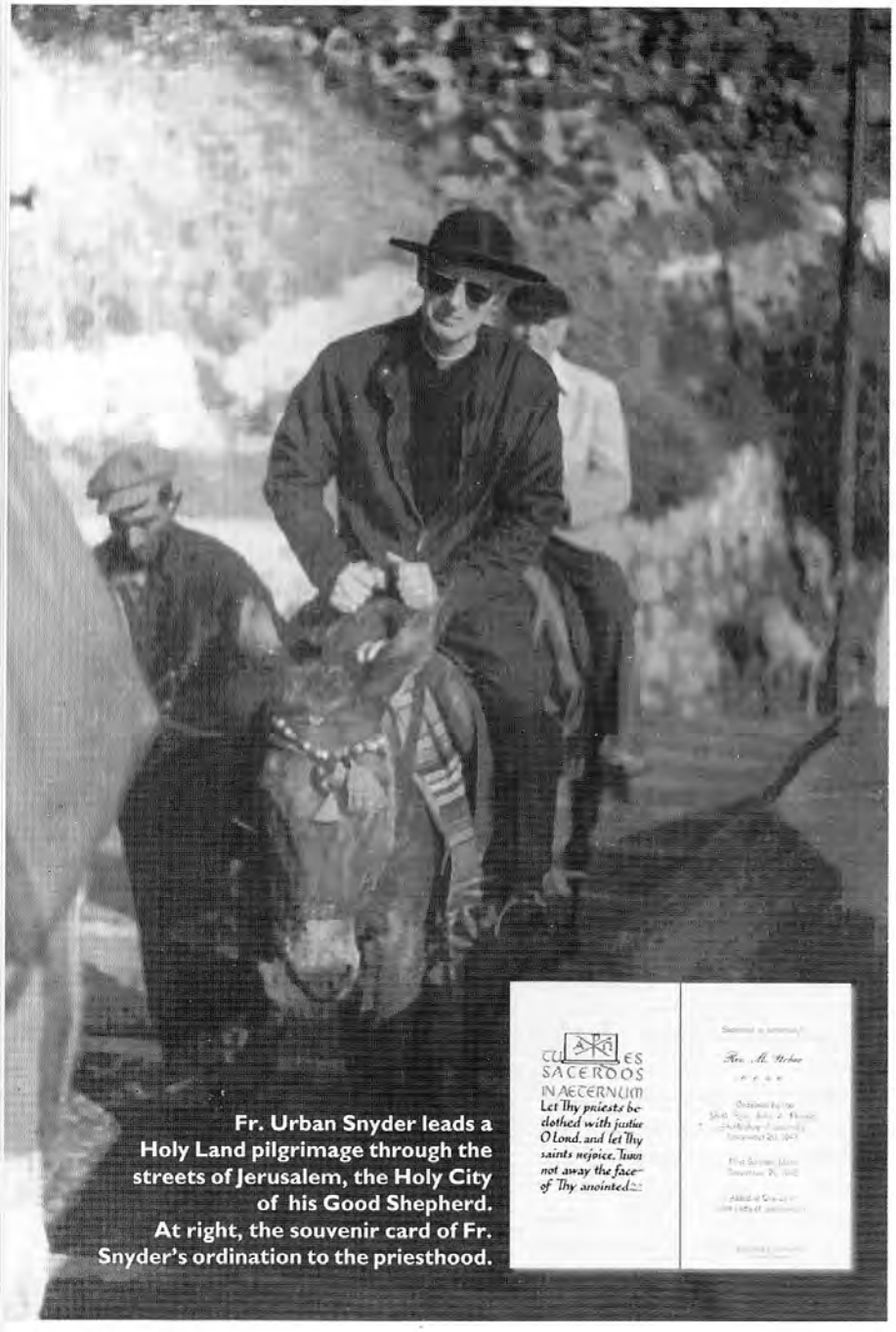
In all of this, we must bear in mind that the distinction between youth and age is a false one. Both crabbed age and youth live together in each of us. We think of ourselves, really, as the individual we are just at this moment, with a past and a future. But for God there is no time. For Him, all things are now. Time and space form a tremendous tapestry of Creation. From conception to our final disposition at the General Judgment, our lives are like strands running through that tapestry.

We can look back to our childhood, adolescence, our twenties; Some of us are looking forward to middle age, to senescence; all of us are anticipating death. But what for us is a road which we have trodden and still must tread, is for God a sort of aerial view. In us as infants He sees all the evil and the good that we will do. In us as elderly He sees the end product of those things. Yet from the beginning it was always one and the same individual.

It is important to observe the elderly closely. Let us emulate what is good in their example, discard what is not. We will be there ourselves, and so can look at them as our future. For them, we are their past. If we are related to them, they have had a hand in making us what we are. Surely, even if they are not directly related to us they have had a hand molding the society in which we live. Our love, honor, and kindness toward them now may merit us a happy and useful old age. Their guidance and good example to us may assist them in making atonement for the sins of their youth. In all of this, there is a great potential for the building up of mutual charity, without which none of us can win Heaven.

Splintering and separation is the great trademark of this cracked-up age: religious from temporal, formal from joyous, youth from age. It is the good and noble thing to fight this artificial fragmenting. The gulf between generations is a good place to start. Ω

The Heart of



Fr. Urban Snyder leads a Holy Land pilgrimage through the streets of Jerusalem, the Holy City of his Good Shepherd. At right, the souvenir card of Fr. Snyder's ordination to the priesthood.

One of the ancients has left us.

Rev. Fr. Urban Snyder, "The Kentucky Pilgrim," has died.

Here was a monk after the heart of the Good Shepherd, simple in life and rich with the wisdom of old age.

Among the effects found in a dresser drawer after his passing was this autobiography and the pictures which accompany this article.

REV. FR. URBAN SNYDER

My Shepherd

It is impossible to think of anything more glorious, more noble, more honorable than participation in the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church. By it we are made members of one Body, are directed by one most holy Head, are filled with one and the same Divine Spirit. We are nourished during our earthly exile by one doctrine and by one Angelic Bread, until we all come to enjoy one eternal happiness in Heaven.—*Pope Pius XII*

A few days before the beginning of Lent, 1962, I was kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament in the church of Monte Cistello, and thinking about the season soon to begin. In this musing, I came to reflect that Easter would be on April 22, and then, suddenly, my heart melted, for I realized that our Lord had done it again and, as usual, I was slow to catch on. Why hadn't I realized sooner? I was only now waking up to the fact that when we made the Solemn Renewal of Baptismal Vows on the night of Holy Saturday, April 21, it would be–that very day–the Golden Anniversary of my own Baptism.

This meant, therefore, that the Lent of 1962 had a very special meaning for me and that I would have to direct it all in a special way towards the proper and fitting celebration of my anniversary. I recalled the words of Leviticus: "You shall sanctify the fiftieth year...for it is the year of jubilee."

It was in considering ways and means of celebrating my jubilee that I decided to suspend temporarily my rule against writing about my own life, in order that I might say a few words in these pages about the mercies of the Lord, which in my case have been so very great. (Really, everyone must say the same thing. The mercies of the Lord are superabundant towards everyone.)

I justify myself from the words of the Archangel Raphael, whom I love so much and who tells us in the Book of Tobias: "It is good to hide the secret of a king, but honorable to reveal and confess the works of the Lord." Time will not permit me to produce a

polished work of any kind. The few friends for whom I am writing this will not mind anyway, if I give it to them just as it comes out of the typewriter, without any rewrite. I have only one intention in view: to glorify God and give Him due thanks for His loving care of my soul. You understand, too, that there is no intention to be complete but just to give a few reflections such as come to me at this time.

The First Dew on My Fleece

Try as I might, I have never been able to remember the slightest detail about the day of my Baptism. That is disgraceful, because the moment of our translation from the Kingdom of Darkness into the Kingdom of Light, the moment of our deliverance from the bondage of Satan and admission into the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the moment in which we are washed and made precious in the Blood of the Divine Redeemer, the moment when our souls are made whiter than snow and more brilliant than the sun, when we receive the infusion of sanctifying grace, the theological and moral virtues, the gifts of the Holy Spirit; the moment, above all, when the Father, Son and Holy Ghost come and begin to dwell intimately in our members, making us living sanctuaries, temples of God–that moment, I say, is the most important moment of a man's life, at least in some respects, for it is the seed, the beginning, the door of everything else, including eternal glory in heaven.

My reflexes have always been slow. I've always been slow in grasping things and appreciating them. And so it was with Baptism. There is documentary evidence to prove that I was already two weeks old when I presented myself at the church of St. Paul on Jackson Street in Louisville. Then confronted with the evidence now, I am humiliated on two counts: first, that I waited so long to present myself (if I had to do it over, I'd be there on the first day) and, secondly, that even after I did present myself, I was so dull, so ungrateful and so unresponsive that it was years later before I began to realize what the Lord had done for me. Only then did I get around to thanking Him and begging His pardon. As I said, my reflexes have always been slow. It's lucky for me that the patience and mercy of God are infinite!

I have no doubt that it is because of this dullness of mine that Jesus has often had recourse to special means of touching my heart on days of great grace in my life. I was born into His Church on Good Shepherd Sunday, and our Lord has always been for me just that–the loving Good Shepherd and Guardian of my soul, as St. Peter calls Him in the Epistle of the Mass on that day. I have often reflected with pleasure on the fact that it is precisely the lamb that gets confused and lost and famished and fatigued that ends up receiving special attention and love from the Master. It is only *this* sheep that gets laid on His sacred shoulders, and without having to move a muscle, it marches with Him at the head of the flock.

On the day of my simple profession, which was June 4, 1944, Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, there was a sermon in Chapter, and the preacher quoted those words of St. Paul which are so appropriate for me:

> See your vocation...The foolish things of the world has God chosen, that He may confound the wise; and the weak things...that He may confound the

Fr. Snyder was born in Louisville, Kentucky on April 27, 1912. Two weeks later he was baptized on the Feast of the Good Shepherd, April 21, a fact he always considered more than chance coincidence.

Father had a keen intellect, seeming "to absorb knowledge rather than acquire it," say those who knew him well. Though no stranger to cardinals, bishops, priests and laity, rich or poor, he always maintained a characteristic humility and serenity. Later in life as a monk, Fr. Snyder would like to walk the country roads alone accompanied by the family dog.

strong; and the base things...and the things that are contemptible has God chosen, and things that are not, that He might bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His sight.

As I said, therefore, out of consideration for my dullness and weakness God has been at pains to arrange nearly all the great days of grace in my life in such a way that, by added and accidental circumstances, He might hope to reach my heart a little more surely. There is in fact one thing which I think I have come to be fairly responsive to and grateful for, and that is this delicate thoughtfulness of God in my regard on such occasions. You will recall that with the Little Flower it was quite different. Her days of grace did not occur on great feasts. She was a strong and responsive soul and had no need of such things. Neither do most people, for that matter.

Our Lord initiated this pattern in my life by decreeing that I should appear on the earth, a few hours before dawn, Easter Sunday, 1912. At the moment when I came into the world, the monks of Gethsemani, sixty miles away, were singing the Alleluias of the Easter nocturns.

As I said, I didn't show up for Baptism until two weeks later, but when I did it was Good Shepherd Sunday. Now the symbol of the Good Shepherd was the equivalent in the primitive Church of the modern devotion to the Sacred Heart. It expresses and represents God's tender compassion and love for us. The first word of the Introit of the Mass is *Misericordia*: "The earth is full of the mercy of the Lord." And the words, "I am the good shepherd; and I know my sheep and mine know me" occur three times in this proper.

Good Shepherd Sunday is therefore a kind of Feast of the Sacred Heart and since I had unwittingly chosen this day for my entrance into the Church, the Lord in His mercy decreed to keep me under this symbol for the rest of my life. Accordingly, He arranged that my First Holy Communion should take place on another feast of His Sacred Heart, which was Holy Thursday, April 17, 1919. I am happy to say that after seven years of grace, I was by this time a little more responsive to the gifts and advances of God's love, and so the day of my First Holy Communion was sufficiently important to me that I have a distinct memory of it and of some of the graces I received around that time, including the moment on Easter Sunday, April 20, three days after my First Holy Communion, when I knelt before the Bishop and was signed with the sign of the Cross and confirmed with the chrism of salvation.

The following year my family took me to Tampa, Florida, and there we lived near a Jesuit church dedicated to the Sacred Heart. Here I attended daily Mass and received Holy Communion with enthusiasm. Here also our Lord deigned to give me graces of faith and fervor which I can still remember, and which I

He could speak at a drop of a hat with confidence and eloquence. He zealously visited shrines and places of Catholic heritage in the US, Europe, and the Holy Land. He became known as "The Kentucky Pilgrim" to the friends who received his homey newsletter.

In 1942, he met Fr. Mateo Crawley, SS.CC., the great promoter of the Home Enthronement to the Sacred Heart who urged him to pursue a vocation. That year, he entered the Cistercian Order at the Abbey of Gethsemani, in Gethsemani, Kentucky, and was ordained a priest in 1947. Here, he would avidly read the lives of the mystics and develop a thirst for the knowledge of God. He was made Master of Novices at the Abbey.

Great hoopla surrounded the entrance of Thomas Merton to Gethsemani, magnified by the popular book he wrote soon after titled *The Seven Story Mountain*. Fr. Urban was cautious towards Thomas Merton's fascination for Eastern religions and his growing influence upon the Abbot and monks. He became aware of a quiet erosion of the abbey structure.

was sometimes to miss in the years following, after we returned to Kentucky and I was no longer able to go to daily Communion, at least in the winter time because one had to get up very early and my health did not permit it in the Kentucky climate.

I should like to mention that as I grew older and reached high school and college level, I did not have much conscious devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus as such, although God always preserved to me by His grace a special devotion to the Mass and to His person present in the tabernacle. These have been the joy and the support of my whole life and I cannot imagine what I should have done without them. Life would have been simply unendurable.

By the time I graduated from college, explicit devotion to the Sacred Heart had faded so far into the background and I had so little understanding of what it meant, that I regarded it as sentimental and paid little attention to it. I first began to have a new attitude and interest in it in the spring of 1938, when my friend, Aileen O'Brien, was about to sail for Spain. She was anxious to arrive in time for the celebration of the Feast of the Sacred Heart there, and she described the enthusiasm with which the Spanish celebrated it. This impressed me a great deal, partly because Aileen herself was an "intellectual," and partly because I had a great admiration for the Catholic instinct of the Spanish. I recalled, too, how at the outbreak of the Civil War, which was then still raging in Spain, the Leftists had sent a firing squad to officially "execute" the statue of the Sacred Heart, which stood on the geographical center of Spain in Madrid. I did not then know it, but it was before this statue that Father Mateo, in the presence of the king and the ministers of government, had twenty years before officially consecrated Spain to His Sacred Heart.

From this time on I began to have conscious interest in the Sacred Heart devotion, but as yet I was without any real light or understanding. I simply began to be aware that there was more to it than I had realized.

The Shepherd Gathers His Lamb

My vocation to be a monk was the result of a gradual growth and, with my usual slowness, it took me a long while to realize where our Lord was leading me. Other people knew that I had a vocation of some kind before I did.

On several occasions during my youth I had given serious consideration to the question of whether or not I ought to be a priest or a religious, and the answer always seemed to be clearly–no! I was called to be a good Catholic, nothing more, and this was my habitual state of mind. The first suspicion and *fear* that our Lord might some day ask more

Meanwhile, there has been another and more interesting development, though it has not reached the action stage at the present time. A certain retired French Archbishop is forming a group of priests, similar to the Sulpicians, for the training for young men for the priesthood, with special attention to giving them a solid spiritual formation. He hopes to found international seminaries in various parts of the world, and already has one for French-speaking students in successful operation in Europe (Ecône, Switzerland). He has many applications from English and American seminarians, and so wishes to found next a seminary for English-speaking students.

This Archbishop visited the Bishop of Covington in late March, and I had the opportunity to meet him and his assistant.... The project has a "Letter of Praise" from Cardinal Wright of the Congregation for the Clergy. If and when he is able to found a seminary in England or America, the Archbishop would like me to help him in the spiritual formation of the candidates....

At present, things remain in the planning stage, and no concrete developments are in immediate prospect, so I intend to carry on here where I am until there is a chance to begin working for the Archbishop, who seems an excellent and saintly man. I will keep you informed of what happens.

A letter of Fr. Snyder to an unnamed priest (May 18, 1971)

of me arose in 1935, when I was twenty-three years old. A year before this I had graduated from Xavier University and, as the depression was on, I was not able to fulfill my desire of going to the Georgetown School of Foreign Service. I returned to Louisville, worked for my father in the daytime and attended the Jefferson School of Law at night. This law school was the first non-Catholic school I had ever attended. I was appalled at the paganism of some of the professors and students, as well as at the low intellectual and ethical standards of the legal profession in my state. Since law school had been a second choice for me anyway, I decided at the end of the first year not to go on. I planned to go to the graduate school of St. Louis University and get an M.A. in English, which would qualify me to teach in a Catholic college. The University offered me a Fellowship and I had a few hundred dollars in the bank–just barely enough, I calculated, to enable me to get my degree. In these plans, however, I was careful to consult our Lord and to ask His help. Interiorly, I felt somehow that I was doing violence to His plans, but I was determined to go ahead. I contented myself with praying that, if it were not His will for me to go to St. Louis, he would turn me aside from it "by a bolt of lightning if necessary." He took me at my word.

At the beginning of August I made a weekend trip to Cincinnati to visit friends and former classmates there. We had a glorious time swimming, riding, and the like. Then on Monday morning, before I could get to the train, the "bolt of lightning" fell. I was taken down with a sudden attack of acute appendicitis. The doctor refused to let me fly home saying I would have to be operated on right away in Cincinnati. This meant double expense as the doctor's fee, the hospital charges and all the other expenses were just about twice what they would have been in my home city. My bank account was wiped out.

This obvious intervention of God had a sobering effect and made me more attentive thereafter to His interior guidance. As I lay in my hospital bed, I could look out the window and see a life-size statue of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemani. I told our Lord that from now on I was going to take literally the words which occur in one of the Sunday Gospels at that time of year: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, all the rest will be added unto you." I told Him that from now on I would be careful not to resist His will or plans regarding my life (a promise I didn't always keep), but would leave everything in His hands in a spirit of trust. I told Him also that if He wanted, I would even be willing to be a priest, though I hoped He wouldn't ask that of me, and I still wanted to go to the foreign service. Looking out of my hospital window at the figure of Jesus in

Fr. Snyder is pictured here with his parents at Gethsemani.

Though the Cistercian takes a vow of stability to his monastery, certain circumstances allow the Abbot to modify this vow. Such was in the case of Fr. Snyder, we was transferred to the Abbey of Our Lady of Genesee in Piffard, New York. Gethsemani was becoming the main "battleground" for the propagation of Vatican II within the Order. Piffard also began to "feel the ripples." In their wake, Fr. Urban requested and received leave of absence to study in Rome.

Former Lawyer Ordained As Priest

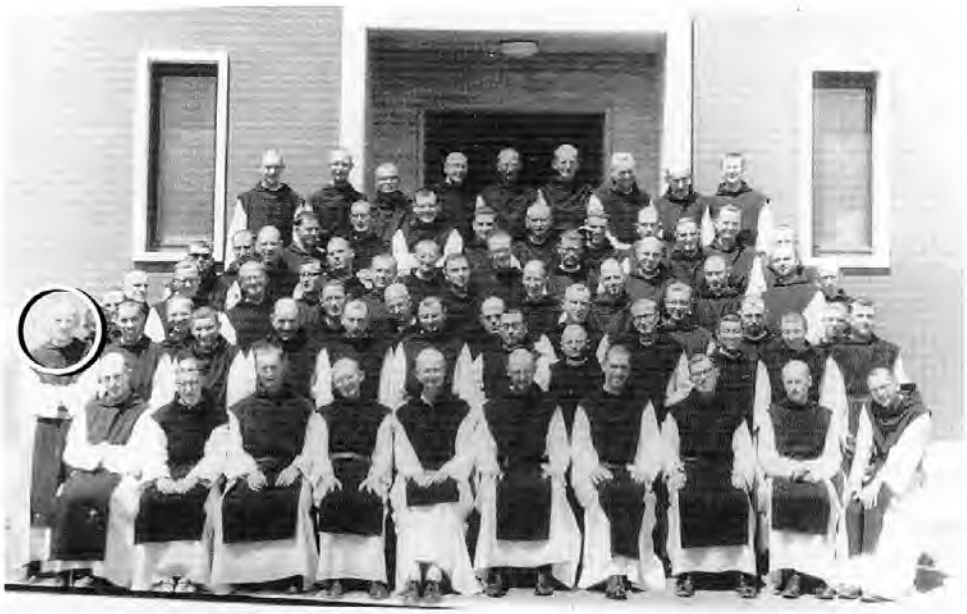
John Snyder, 35, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Snyder, 435 E. Ormsby, was ordained a priest at Gethsemane Monastery, Gethsemane, Ky., Saturday. He offered his first mass yesterday.

Snyder entered Gethsemane five years ago and made his solemn profession as a Trappist monk last fall.

A graduate of St. Xavier High School here in 1929, he attended Xavier University, [illegible] and was graduated there in 1933. He attended the Jefferson School of Law and was admitted to the bar in 1940. For two and a half years, before entering the monastery, he served as secretary to Father F. N. Pitt, secretary of the Catholic School Board.

Fr. Snyder assisted as one of the ministers at the Requiem Mass for Rev. Frederic Dunne (1948), Abbot of the Gethsemani Monastery for thirteen years. The main celebrant was Archbishop John Floersh of Louisville (wearing mitre in the center), who had ordained Fr. Snyder the year before. In the far upper left, also in mitre, is Archbishop Joseph Ritter of St. Louis.

Gethsemani, I understood clearly that this statue was a symbol, a clue to my future. I tried to penetrate the mystery of just how or why this was true, but our Lord in His mercy would not lift the veil just yet. My soul was still too weak and I was still too much attached to the things of this world. I think I should have been very much depressed if I had learned at that time that I was destined to become a Trappist monk. I scarcely knew what the Trappists were, but one thing I did know: I didn't want to be one. And if I had gone to St. Louis, my whole life would have been different and I probably would never have become a monk at all. I thank God now for His loving care of me.



After having held every office in the Gethsemani Monastery except Abbot, Father became a student at the Cistercian House for Students in Rome. Here is the picture of the House in Spring, 1962. (Fr. Snyder is first on the left in the second row from the foreground.)

In the fall of 1935 I returned to law school and continued to live at home. Meanwhile, Father Pitt, superintendant of the Catholic schools, had founded the Thomas More Society, a group of young Catholic college graduates, whom he brought together. He was the president and I became the secretary. This was the beginning of seven years of close association with this lovable man, whose wide interests and contacts also helped to make life interesting.

Fr. Snyder was always a monk–in his demeanor, his speech, his movements, his silence. Whenever he could, he took to meditation and prayer. As much as possible, he kept his monastic hours in the chapel.

The first project of the Thomas More Society was to sponsor a lecture by Christopher Hollis, the English writer and author of a life of St. Thomas More, who had just been canonized.

Hollis spent two or three days with us and as a part of the entertainment program, Father Pitt and Mr. Reenan of the American Book Company arranged to drive him down to the Abbey of Gethsemani. They invited me to go along and as I had never been there and was curious about the place, I gladly accepted. I was on the way to finding my vocation but didn't know it. I fell in love with Gethsemani and the monks at once, and as I walked through the church for the first time I remember looking at the choir stalls and saying to myself: "I wish I could have a vocation to this life, but it's too hard for me. I am sorry I can't be a monk."

This was the first time in my life that I had experienced a positive and genuine attraction to a supernatural vocation of any kind.

The following spring I graduated from law school, took the bar examination and was licensed to practice in the state of Kentucky. But I had no intention of doing so. Meanwhile the Jesuits in their

Fr. Snyder's presence in Rome from 1960-66 gave him a "front seat" on the proceedings of the Vatican Council. Combined with his experiences of encroaching modernism back at Gethsemani, Father was quick to recognize the flaws in the forthcoming Council documents. Still always "the pilgrim," here he is on a trip to Florence, Italy in 1966 just before returning to Kentucky to become a chaplain for the Sisters of Nazareth.

new college at West Baden Springs offered me a job doing editorial and clerical work. It didn't pay much, but the atmosphere and the work were most agreeable to me, and seeing that it would be good for my soul to live in such a place and to be associated with the Fathers, I accepted. I was consciously keeping my resolution of a year before to seek first the kingdom of God, regardless of material considerations.

I went to West Baden at the beginning of July, just as the Spanish Civil was about to begin. Around the feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, I found the autobiography of St. Therese of the Child Jesus in the library and began to read it. The decisive moment of my life had come. The Little Flower understood the ways of love and spoke the language of love. She won me completely. When I had finished the book I knew that I would have to become a monk at any cost. My thoughts turned to Gethsemani, and on the feast of St. Bernard, I wrote a letter to Dom Frederic Dunne, whom I had met the previous December when Father Pitt had taken me to the monastery. I also wrote to the Carmelite Sisters in Louisville, begging their prayers. In the Providence of God, their devoted prayers and friendship became invaluable to me and have remained so to this day.

During the Thanksgiving holidays of November, 1936, I went to make a retreat at Gethsemani and discuss the question of my vocation. Happily for me the retreat master was the saintly Father Augustine Arcand of Three Rivers, Canada, who had become a monk at Gethsemani at the age of sixty in order to avoid being made a bishop. This learned and prudent man told me that I had a genuine vocation, but counselled me to wait. This pleased me a great deal and was a great relief, because although I felt attracted to the life, I was also still very much attached to the world, and the thought of entering filled me with dread. It would take several more years before I would be sufficiently mature spiritually, and sufficiently detached from the things of this world to be able to enter the monastery with joy and enthusiasm. During these years I came to know and love the Rule of St. Benedict and some of the writings of St. Bernard, who attracted me powerfully. Having returned to Louisville in the spring of 1937, I found eventually an excellent director in the Prior of the Dominicans, Father John B. Walsh, who gave me the writings of Abbot Vonier and other good books to read. By the time I did enter Gethsemani in April, 1942, my vocation rested on deep and solid convictions and I had sufficient knowledge of prayer and the spiritual life to be able to avoid being crushed or driven away by the trials which awaited me. We can do nothing without God's grace and, in times of adversity, we have to be able to keep our equanimity and continue to use with faith, intelligence and perseverance the means of

In my last letter I told you about meeting Archbishop Lefebvre, who, as Bishop of Dakar, in Africa, took part in Vatican II, and who later became the Superior General of the Holy Ghost Fathers. He is now retired from that position, and is devoting himself to the work I explained to you, namely, the founding of a Fraternity, or, association of priests....

The plan is to eventually, however, to open a seminary in the USA, so I am hoping the Lord will give me sufficient health and strength to be able to function in England for whatever time is necessary, before being able to return to the States and work in the American seminary. There is no lack of applicants, incidentally. Four eager Americans are going to enroll this Fall at the Swiss seminary, and we have other applications. If we open an American seminary, there will be many more. I myself know nearly half a dozen excellent young men, now of high school age, who would like to study for the priesthood but are unwilling to risk their souls in any seminaries they know of. Archbishop Alter, retired Archbishop of Cincinnati, remarked recently to a group of priests that he thought Archbishop Lefebvre's project was the great hope of the Church; and that he, Archbishop Alter, thought every existing seminary in the USA should be shut down for two years, and then start over with new faculties and strict discipline.

A letter of Fr. Snyder to an unnamed priest (August 10, 1971)

grace. After I entered Gethsemani, I saw that my preparation had been providential and necessary.

The day I arrived at the monastery I was ushered into the church where the monks were singing the conventual High Mass. As I sat in a bench in the transept I looked up at the big stained glass window on the other side of the transept. It was a life-size picture of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemani, and was exactly like the statue which I had seen from my hospital window in August of 1935...

On the Good Shepherd's Shoulders, Listening to His Heart

In his encyclical on the Sacred Heart, Pope Pius XII explains very beautifully the solid doctrinal basis of this devotion. It is not only not sentimental when properly understood but, as another Pope said, it is the "quintessence of religion."

Since the time of the Incarnation, God has loved us with three different kinds of love. All three of these come to us through, and are symbolized in, the Sacred Heart of Jesus. These loves are, first, His infinite, eternal love; secondly, the infused, supernatural *created* love in the soul of Jesus; and finally, the natural, human love of the God-Man.

It is one thing, however, to know the theology of the Sacred Heart and another thing to understand the loves which that Heart symbolizes. There is a passage somewhere in Pius XII's encyclical to which I should like to call attention. He says that no one can make substantial progress in the spiritual life unless he be admitted into the mystical secrets of the Sacred Heart. It is these secrets which are often little known to learned theologians, and on the

A letter of Fr. Snyder, "The Kentucky Pilgrim," to friends and benefactors (November 19, 1971)

...As you know, when I came to Europe it was with the expectation of spending at least some months in England, helping a priest already sent there by Archbishop Lefebvre. Now it appears doubtful that I will remain long in England at all, for the Archbishop is anxious that work should start in the United States. Just now I am in Lourdes, while the Archbishop is about to go to Rome. He expects to be back in Fribourg, Switzerland, by the end of November and wants me to come there in early December. Not far from Fribourg in the Province of Valais is the new seminary. He wants me to visit it and observe the spirit and discipline. Also, he would like for me to meet the four American seminarians who entered there this Fall. Only one of them knew French before arriving, so they are naturally going through a period of adjustment. All Masses at the seminary are in Latin and I hear that the students sing the Gregorian Chant beautifully.

I expect to remain in Switzerland at least until the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Whether I shall remain longer or not will depend on the Archbishop, and where I shall go from there also depends on him. Although I cannot be certain, it seems likely that after December 8th I will head for England, stopping at two places in Germany to visit persons whom I want to see. If the Archbishop decides that I am only to pay a visit in England and not stay and work there awhile, then I may be back in the States by January. And after that, what? At the present time, I simply do not know. We have to feel our way one step at a time and wait for indications of Divine Providence. It may fall to me to be the first organizer of Archbishop Lefebvre's work in the United States and I feel unsuited for the task, temperamentally and otherwise. But that is still conjectural and in the future. I believe in taking one day at a time, which is according to the Lord's Prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread...." We were not taught to say, "Give us this week our week's bread...." or, "Give us this month our month's bread...."

...I am truly a pilgrim at the present time, not just physically, but in a deep spiritual sense, groping from day to day for the will of God, and, like the spouse in the Canticle of Canticles, *"seeking Him whom my soul loves."*

other hand, so very well known to souls who, perhaps, could not express the theology of the Sacred Heart. Best of all, of course, is to know both the theology
and the secrets, as Father Mateo did, or Father Pichon.

Father Mateo used to say that for him, devotion to the Sacred Heart meant first of all devotion to the Mass and the Blessed Sacrament. This is a practical directive. It means, too, that anyone who has these Eucharistic devotions has also a devotion to the Sacred Heart, whether he knows it or not.

Pius XII says in his encyclical that the Holy Spirit is the gift of the Sacred Heart. Therefore, this devotion is an excellent and pleasant way of obtaining an increase of the gifts of the Holy Spirit within ourselves. They are terribly needed and terribly neglected in these days of *angst*, these days of fear and spiritual pessimism, when everyone seems to think that the arm of the Lord has somehow been shortened. The infinite attributes of God are objective realities, they exist whether we understand them or not, and they are always at our disposal through prayer and the sacraments. It is the Sacred Heart of Jesus Who said: "All power in heaven and on earth is given to *Me*." In Him, too, are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Why do we have so little faith?

It is not necessary to have a profound understanding of the devotion to the Sacred Heart in order to begin to draw profit from it. The first steps must always be made in darkness and in blind faith. He gives a little light. If you act on it, He gives a little more. Then if you act on that, He gives still more– and so on. It all comes about as a gradual growth, and then one day you wake up and realize that you have begun to understand a little something of God's ways and God's love. It seems to me that we fail too often to take those first steps. We want absolute proofs and guarantees in advance. We want to see. We forget that the whole of the present life is a time of trial and of *faith*. God tries our faith precisely in order that it might grow and increase, and bring forth more fruits of charity and patience and hope. But acting by faith often involves humiliation in the eyes of men, and that turns us back. If the blind man who kept crying out, "Jesus, Son of David, have

After a stint at St. Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio, and service in the diocese of Covington, Kentucky, Father was introduced to Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre and in 1972 was given official canonical permission to join the fledgling Society of Saint Pius X. He was named professor by Archbishop Lefebvre at the seminary of the Society in Ecône, Switzerland, where he taught from 1972-76. In 1974, he made a retreat with the priests and students pictured here. Fr. Snyder is in the row of priests, second to the right of Archbishop Lefebvre (in center with pectoral cross).

Aching again for the monk's life, Fr. Snyder accepted an invitation to be a private chaplain at the estate of Haus Kalbeck in Germany. Relations of one of Father's long-time American friends lived here. Father served in this regard from 1977-82.

mercy on me" had yielded to human respect when he was rebuked by the crowd, he would have given up and our Lord would have passed him by, most likely. If the Chananite woman had folded up when Jesus humiliated her, if she had turned around and stalked away, her daughter would not have been delivered from the devil. Prayer and faith involve humiliation, and we are seldom willing to take it. I believe that is where our weak point lies, and that is why we don't make progress in the mystical secrets of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. That's why Judas failed. He didn't like the idea of going around in public with a basket and picking up fragments of bread and fish. He yielded to his fears. He was overcome by angst. He was not willing to take the first steps of faith, trusting in the goodness and power of God. He felt he had to look out for his future, and his good name, and his old age....What a mess he made of things!

The climax of history was the moment when the Sacred Heart of Jesus was pierced by a lance on the cross. From creation to that moment was the morning of the world; from that moment to Judgment Day is the evening of the world. It can be shown, I think, that the whole of revelation and all the graces of redemption are summed up and contained in the central verse of all Scripture, which is "One of the soldiers with a spear opened His side, and immediately there came out blood and water."

Conclusion: The Bonds of Love

Perhaps this is fanciful, but I sometimes wonder if the grace of my vocation was not a reward for two pennies that I once gave our Lord.

One Sunday morning when I was eight years old, my father and I came out of the front door of the Sacred Heart Church at Tampa. The church was on a corner. We turned the corner and started walking along the side of the church towards home. When we passed a side door, I was seized by a sudden impulse of generosity and, bidding my astonished father to wait, I dashed through the door and emptied into the nearby poor box the contents of a make-believe purse which I was carrying. It contained only two cents, but I had given the Sacred Heart of Jesus everything I had, and He gives all for all.

When the time came for my Solemn Profession at Gethsemani, I had nothing to do with the choice of a date. Another young man from Louisville was to make profession with me. He had his heart set on the feast of the Sacred Heart as the date for the ceremony. That was most agreeable to me, but there was a difficulty in the way. In those days the Cistercians celebrated the Conventual High Mass of this feast before the Blessed Sacrament exposed. On this account, it was not customary to have professions on that day, as such ceremonies are not permitted when the Blessed Sacrament is in the monstrance. My companion asked Dom Frederic if this difficulty could not be overcome by putting a white veil in front of the monstrance during the profession ceremonies. This was licit, but he said no.

My companion and I then chose the feast of the Visitation. Not long after, however, Providence intervened. The Archbishop sent word to the Abbot that he would come to the monastery on Saturday, June 14, to confer Holy Orders. Since I lacked none of the requirements for ordination except solemn profession, and the only feast available before June 14 was the feast of the Sacred Heart, which occurred on June 13, Dom Frederic decided on his own accord that our profession would be on the latter day. He had a veil put in front of the monstrance, but it was a little low. Jesus appeared to be peeping at us over the top of the veil....

Next day the Archbishop came and ordained me a sub-deacon. But the Good Shepherd had arranged something else for that day, too. It happened to be the golden wedding anniversary of my parents. After the ceremonies were over, my parents and family and I all had dinner together at the gatehouse.

There is one thought I would like everyone to take from these pages:

> The life of man upon earth is a love affair.

God loves every creature which He has made, and He is hungry for our love in return.

The *Introit* of the Mass for Ash Wednesday is taken from the Book of Wisdom, and is a revelation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus:

> You have mercy on all, because you can do all things. You close your eyes to the sins of men, in order that they may repent. For you love everything that is, and hate none of the things which you have made, for if you had hated anything you would not have formed it....But you spare all, because they are yours, O Lord and lover of souls.

Notice the reasoning here. God has mercy on all because He is omnipotent. He spares all because He would not have made them in the first place if He had not loved them. He loves all because they are His. That is why God says in another place of Scripture: "Can a woman forget her infant...? But if she should forget, I will not forget you."

A mother loves her own son more than any other child, even though her own may be the ugliest, the dumbest, or the meanest on the block. She loves him precisely because he is *her* boy. Now it is the same way with God. He loves us because we are *His* boys, *His* children. He is the Omnipotent One Who made us out of nothing. We were in His mind from all eternity and, being in love with the idea of use,

He brought us into being according to His Plan.

God is, so to speak, a free artist. In His mind there is an infinite number of possible beings, most of whom will never know actual existence. Like a human artist who has many ideas in mind, but chooses only this one and that one to bring into existence, so with God. The very fact that you and I exist, therefore, is proof that God was in love with the idea of us. And if we allow Him, He will perfect the good work which He has begun in us.

The intimacy of the bond with our Creator is greater than we realize. It is true that God created our bodies only indirectly, using the instrumentality of creatures. But not so with our souls. They are spirits, and in creating them God could not employ any kind of creatures as an instrument or helper, not even an angel. The creation of a spirit is an act of pure creation so proper to the Omnipotent One that He must do it all by Himself. It requires a direct exercise of His infinite power; it is a personal and exclusive work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. How old are you? According to your age, you know that just so many years ago you came forth from the very bosom of God, and are meant to return to the same Bosom.

The soul is like a boomerang. Thrown out into time and space, it is meant to describe as it were a circle, and return to Him Who cast it. As the boomerang may strike an object and not return to the thrower, but fall to the ground, so a soul may fall into hell and not return to its Maker. But this never happens except through the soul's own full and deliberate fault. For God wills all men to be saved, and every man has grace sufficient for his salvation. "Christ died for all."

Which reminds me of another bond we have with God–one that is deeper, stronger, more intimate, more touching than the bond of creation. It would seem almost impossible that such a bond could exist, yet it does.

When Jesus was hanging on the Cross, His divinely enlightened intellect was able to look down through all the ages. He could see everyone of us, and every action of our lives, as clearly and distinctly as if He had nothing else before Him. This is a mystery which we will understand only in Heaven, but meanwhile we know it by faith and should never forget it for an instant. It is terribly important for us to realize the personal nature of the Redemption, the connection between Jesus on the Cross and my own life and cross; the confrontation between His Heart and my heart.

Physical sufferings have a limit. The senses will register just so much pain and no more. But the sufferings of a man's mind and heart are almost without limit. Indeed, they *are* without limit when there is question of a God-Man. No matter how much He is suffering, He can still suffer more. His sufferings can always be increased. Now, Jesus on the Cross, seeing every sin of my life and seeing it as it is in the eyes of God, suffered an additional martyrdom, so to speak, for each one of those sins. He suffered certain things in His Mind and Heart that would not have been were it not for me. And these special sufferings were unspeakable. "He loved me, and delivered Himself for *me*." He bought me at a great price. When He created me, it cost Him no effort, but when He redeemed me....Ah! He is anxious not to lose what has cost Him so much.

I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

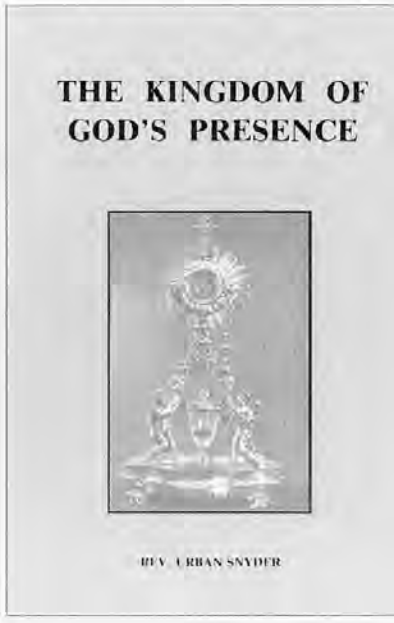
I am the Good Shepherd, *and I know mine and mine know me*, even as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for my sheep.

In 1982, Father returned to the States to join his closest friend, Fr. Francis Hannifin, who had retired to the home of the Pfeiffers, a traditional Catholic family, in Boston, Kentucky. "The Pilgrim" received innumerable requests for spiritual help and counselling to which he always obliged. He wrote prolifically during these days, supplying articles to *The Remnant*, about St. Catherine of Siena, and for his international newsletter *Kyrie Eleison*. He spoke often of Our Lady and habitually closed his sermons with a petition to her. He strongly preached love of Divine Providence and authored a pamphlet on this called *The Kingdom of God's Presence* (available from Angelus Press: Price 50¢). Reaching 80 and his strength failing, Fr. Snyder was returned to Our Lady of Genesee, New York, to be cared for by the community that remembered him. On January 25, 1995, minutes after the monks would have finished their night-chant of *Compline*, Father died a serene and edifying death, and, was buried on the monastery grounds. "*Requeiscat in pace*, Pilgrim."

BY EILEEN

R.I.P. The Story of

...they heard the sound of t



It would take a complete volume to do justice to the life of a priest who sought only a life of contemplation in the silence of the cloister but who actually spent over 35 years as a priest trying to outrun the beast of modernism unleashed at Vatican II.

Fr. Snyder was born in Louisville, Kentucky on April 7, 1912 and was christened John Francis Snyder in St. Paul's Church on the Feast of the Good Shepherd, April 21, 1912. He was the son of a grocer. His high school education was completed under the Xaverian Brothers at the old St. Xavier High School on Broadway in downtown Louisville. Four years later he received his A.B. degree in history from Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio (1934).

On returning to Louisville he held various jobs while attending the Jefferson School of Law (now part of the University of Louisville) at night. He obtained his degree in law and was admitted to the bar in 1940. Instead of going into legal practice he went to work as a secretary for Monsignor Felix N. Pitt, Director of the Catholic School Board in Louisville. At that time Msgr. Pitt was involved in a struggle to save Catholic elementary education threatened by financial problems. He ultimately had to sacrifice the first and eighth grades, which grieved him deeply. Fr. Snyder's legal background and keen intellect were invaluable to the Monsignor during this period.

Sometime during the school year of 1941-42 Fr. Mateo-Crawley, SS.CC. visited Louisville and spoke at St. Philip Neri Church, the parish in which Fr. Snyder was living at that time. He had an opportunity to talk to Fr. Mateo personally. He had had thoughts of a vocation, but was unsure. Fr. Mateo urged him to pursue his vocation. Soon after this conversation, (1942) Fr. Snyder entered Gethsemani Abbey where he had been making annual retreats since graduating from high school. Although familiar with the Jesuits, he preferred the Benedictine Rule.

On entering the Abbey under Abbot Frederic M. Dunne, O.C.S.O., he was given the name "Urban" by which he was known to the time of his death. (Abbot Dunne was the last of the strict Cistercian Abbots at Gethsemani. Many of the holy monks received under him would die as martyrs of Vatican II.)

Fr. Urban made his solemn vows on the feast of the Sacred Heart in 1947 and was ordained a priest December 20, 1947. He held every office but abbott at the monastery; his first assignment being Master of Novices and Retreat Master.

Another postulant had entered Gethsemani Abbey about the same time (1941) as Fr. Urban. This postulant immediatey attracted national attention as Thomas Merton (religious name "Louis). Thus Fr. Urban and Fr. Louis were in the novitiate at the same time. Fr. Urban knew him well. Fr. Louis took solemn vows on March 19, 1947 shortly before Abbot Dunne's death on August 4, 1948. Under the new Abbot, Fr. Louis became a voice to be heard and the monastery began to feel its impact. His particular interest was in the Eastern religions and he was allowed to initiate many of the practices within

"The Pilgrim"

the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day...(Gen. 3:8)

Do we not find a haunting beauty here, inviting us to linger and contemplate hidden mysteries? If we reflect a moment must we not say that these words give a distinct impression that the Lord God was in the habit of coming down to visit Adam and Eve? How else would they recognize His "sound," possibly meaning His "footsteps," if they had not heard them before?...This verse is inexpressibly poignant and touching. It describes God, the infinitely loving Father, coming in His habitual way to visit Adam and Eve, as if He did not know that they had sinned! He, of course, did know, and He might have rained down fire and brimstone on their heads, and let the devil carry them off to hell. There would have been no injustice in that, for their sin was very great. But no, that is not His way. Adam and Eve are His children, and He is not going to abandon them. So He pays them one more visit, coming with imperturbable tranquillity and sweetness. He moves them to contrition, imposes suitable penances, gives them the instructions they need for the hard conditions of life they will now find on the earth. The world, through their fault, has become a vale of tears, but He does not wish it to become a vale of despair.

–Fr. Snyder in *The Kingdom of God's Presence* (Angelus Press. Price: 50¢. 16pp.)

the monastery. One only has to read *A Song for Nobody* by Ron Seitz to know the real Thomas Merton as Louisvillians knew him, and then go back and re-read Thomas Merton's *The Sign of Jonas* to see that the seeds of Vatican II had already been firmly planted as far back as 1947.

This change in spirituality upset Fr. Urban immensely and he requested a move in the late 1950's. This request was granted and he was transferred to the Abbey of Our Lady of Genesee in Piffard, N.Y. where the Abbot had been one of his novices. Since Cistercian monks were being given leave of absence for further study, in 1960 Fr. Urban requested to study in Rome. Thus he was in Rome during the Council 1961-1963. His previous experience at Gethsemani Abbey served him well to interpret the proceedings of Vatican II.

He returned from Europe and became chaplain for the Sisters of Nazareth, Kentucky in 1966 until the effects of Vatican II became so obvious. He returned to St.Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1968 and received his Masters in English (8/29/69). He then offered his services to the Covington, Kentucky diocese under Bishop Ackerman in 1971 and was sent to St. Theresa Church in South Gate, Kentucky. During that time he met Archbishop Lefebvre and was officially admitted into the Society of St. Pius X about 1972 and taught at Econe, Switzerland from 1972-1976.

From 1977-1982 he served as a private chaplain in a German castle. This provided him with many opportunitites to visit the numerous shrines of Europe and the Holy Land as well as enjoy many cherished moments of contemplation.

He had previously spent his summers with Fr. Hannifin either at Fairfield, Kentucky or Boston, Kentucky. In 1982 he came to Boston to reside until he returned to the monastery at Genesee in 1993 where he died on January 25, 1995. From the time he left Gethsemani, Fr. Urban always endeavored to be near the Blessed Sacrament and the Holy Mass in his efforts to flee the beast of modernism. The beast never caught him for in his last illness, he died peacefully, an edification to all. He died as the contemplative he wanted to become. Ω

BY REV. FR. TIM

R.I.P. A Pathfinder

We call those men who go before us and clear the way, blazing the trail to follow, Pathfinders. In the spiritual order of the present time, such were those priests of God who remained faithful to the Catholic Faith in face of perhaps the greatest tempest ever to sweep the Church. It was they who found the true measure of fidelity to the Church despite diabolic sophisms spread to confuse the trail of Tradition. If ever pathfinding was of great importance, it was certainly in those times when, as enemies of the Church within were obscuring all the old paths, a handful of faithful priests were blazing the path of resistance in the line of Tradition. How true that the flame of Tradition and Faith has been kept alive and burning by such priests. It is due to their labors, into which we have entered, that the path to follow to us seems clear and easy, and often causes us to wonder why others can not see what we see so clearly. Perhaps these others have had no pathfinders to follow, and though they have access to the same Tradition as we, nevertheless without the guidance of wise and experienced men, they have gone shipwreck concerning most grave matters of Faith. But we who have had such pathfinders owe them no less than the salvation of our souls.

Now one such man was Fr. Urban Snyder, born in Louisville, Kentucky, of Catholic German stock, the stuff that catholicized the majority of what was catholicized of the Ohio Valley from Pittsburgh to St. Louis. Baptized in the Church of St. Paul in Louisville on Good Shepherd Sunday, he died on the feast of St. Paul, January 25, 1995. From one end of his life to the other, the working of Divine Providence is as visible to us who look back over his life, as it was to him who lived it. A man who never anticipated God's Providence, Fr. Urban was one who always awaited its signs, and once seen clearly, he would follow it resolutely and firmly, like the Catholics of old, not second guessing God nor faltering in his step. From the days of his youth his will was firmly set on God's service, and unto the end Fr. Urban was a man of whom anyone could say, "he seeks always the will of God." While we can not delay on all the episodes of his life, nevertheless at every stage which marks a change in how and where Fr. Urban served God, he saw and followed distinct signs of Providence, recognized and followed by him as such. It is little wonder that he was a man of spiritual vigor and energy, always prepared to preach, speak, write, listen, and go where he saw himself needed as God's minister.

The stamp that Divine Providence had left on and continued to leave on Fr. Urban impressed itself on others. He helped numerous souls, and especially those who felt themselves carrying the burden of the difficulties of this life. To them he would so often say: "Whenever God closes one door, he always opens another; you must wait for him to show you this door." And so people wrote him and received similar advice adapted with great unction so typical of him to their particular circumstances. When around or near Fr. Urban, one always had to carry in to him a pile of mail or announce a visitor calling, or tell them he wouldn't be around for a few weeks because of another peregrination (for this cause he called himself the "Kentucky Pilgrim"). Folks with rather special problems didn't aggravate his calm. "They're unique!" he would say with a twinkle in his eyes which left no trace of impatience. Another of his favorite sayings to souls was: "Ask Mary to give you Her Heart to love Jesus, and ask Jesus to give you His Heart to love His Mother Mary."

For a youngster, waiting for Fr. Urban to come back from Europe was like waiting for a page out of the History of St. Bede or some other medieval

's Passage

chronicle to come to life again. His conversations at table brought one into contact with barons and countesses, bishops and archbishops, saints and martyrdoms, ancient places and their histories, customs of Trappists and customs of peoples. For the youngster, it roused in him the desire to see, do, read and feel as the stories told... or foretold. Out of him flowed stories about Cologne, Ecône, Rome, Padre Pio, Montalambert's *History of the Church*, Eucharistic miracles...and he had been there and could tell you things you could never read about. In short, one was dropped for the time of that table conversation into the time or place talked about. When Fr. Urban was around, you learned how to take a long time eating!

Such language and daily conversation which came out not only in his words but also in his actions and habits, could only stir up and encourage numerous vocations. The monk-novice master became the priest begetting other priests. In a 12-year-old boy he instilled a long-range desire to go to a far-away place which became a reality some ten years later. Later, the presence of Fr. Urban helped the 18-year-old young man in front of one shut door to his vocation, soon find the other door that led to the realization of his vocation. This kind of influence is the providential stuff in the scale of the minor miracles which are seen best only in hindsight. How much hindsight on Fr. Urban many a soul will have bound up in his life story will be the delight of the mercies of God on Judgment Day.

Another grace of Fr. Urban was in giving a long range view on a short term problem. The long range view came from his love of God's will, and the application to the short term problem arose from his knowledge of human nature coupled with his gray hairs and wisdom which gave him a deep keel in human affairs. He would say, "Keep your eye on heaven." To analyze a project or comment on some new political situation, he would ask, "Does it save souls?" And the cross was no stranger to Fr. Urban. He could recognize it when he saw it because he had lived it. He would relate many an occasion when he could barely give a conference due to sickness, but providentially he came out just well enough at the last moment to proceed. Hence, when recognizing the cross shared by others he would say, "Don't let the sufferings of life go to waste."

Fr. Urban was a man of balance, something the best thinkers of modern times would have acclaimed as being exactly according to the dictates of reason and grace. Small as he was and somewhat frail, he nevertheless had a good appetite and he loved to comment that "God has given me a special talent for sleeping." No doubt, deep inside his soul and beside his contemplative spirit of the Gethsemani Trappist monk, he was thinking of the rest of the soul in contemplation of the Truth. No doubt now–or at least very soon–this talent of his can have its full and perfect expression before the Beatific Vision. Let us hasten the perfection of his talent and pray for his hasty appearance before the Lord of Hosts, counting on our own benefits in the sharing of his graces through the communion of saints. Ω

The young Fr. Timothy Pfeiffer

A MOTHER'S VIEW

BY MRS. PAUL MIDDLEMORE

Welcome Inn

This month, *The Angelus* addresses a classification of people we will inevitably belong to given a normal life span: the Elderly. Society tries to pretend that being elderly is "avoidable" by means of: exercise, using mind over matter and "think young," travelling, etc. If these don't work, there are those who dare to suggest avoiding old age with euthanasia. Society has one more option for those who are "unfortunate" enough to become elderly but don't want to be murdered "mercifully"–you can be put in a "nice" institution.

When first pondering this topic of the elderly, I asked my 80-year-old grandmother about her thoughts on "rest homes." She admitted that the thought of being institutionalized is every older person's nightmare. It doesn't take much imagination to answer the question: "Would I want my children to put me 'away'"? Let's face it, it doesn't matter how expensive, special, cleanly or professional the institution might be, there's no place like home! A stranger can never care for a person like a family member unless they are motivated by supernatural charity, and that is rare these days.

Laying aside the idea of institutionalizing grandparents, let us examine the joys and advantages (with no further stress on the obligations!) of welcoming the "older generation" into our homes when they are ready for some extra help. This is what families have always done until the last decades, and there are tremendous benefits, joys and opportunities for the whole household that lie hidden beyond the point of obligation.

One of the greatest benefits is the lesson it teaches to the children. This is clearly illustrated in a memory I have from my own childhood of my father's constant generosity and concern for his parents. Whatever they needed, he was busy getting for them without apparent concern for his own needs. They had cared for him all those years, now it was his privilege to help them. Whenever there was a crisis, he was off to be right there. This was a living example for his children which left a lasting impression of true generosity and responsibility. Isn't that what we all struggle to instill in our children?

For those who have their older generation move into the home, there are endless opportunities for the family to practice true love of neighbor and the reality of whatever you do to others, you do to Christ. Each day is a lesson for children as they and their parents live the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Opportunities arise to practice heroic patience and charity while the adults juggle to retain the proper "pecking order" with an overall

emphasis on peace for the household. The wisdom that should come with age brings a fullness to any family and what a blessing to have extra ears to hear the children as they read, recite and relay their lessons and experiences.

The presence of the elderly in the home inspires reflection upon the true reason for life and the importance of death. If they are holy, then, like Simeon and Anna, they will be filled with the Holy Ghost, awaiting the coming of the "Messiah." Watching and waiting for the moment when He will release them from this vale of tears, they make ready to repeat Simeon's canticle: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant..." Their ardent love of God touches all with a lasting impression of how to prepare for the most important moment of our lives–death.

If the elderly relative is not prepared for death which is coming sooner than they would like to think, here is the obligation for the family to warn them of upcoming death, that they might prepare. Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P. says that "It is a lack of faith when friends do not dare warn a sick person that he is going to die. It is a sin. They deceive him and prevent him from preparing himself." Constant prayer and penance will be the active ingredients for begging the grace of a happy death for this loved one. The littlest ones in the family can be enlisted to help with their sacrifices. The family should pray in unison for the grace of a happy death for everyone, and this intention will help to spark some thought in those seemingly closest to death. St. Pius X counseled that we should daily offer our life: "Lord, my God, whatever be the kind of death which it pleases Thee to reserve for me, I from this moment on receive that death with all my heart and with all my soul. I accept that death from Thy hands, with all its anguish, pains, and sorrows." A very good practice is to have Mass celebrated for obtaining the grace of graces, that of a good death. Death comes to everyone and the important lesson taught to the family will be, to be prepared since this is the doorway to eternity you can only go through once! By helping to prepare another soul for eternity, everyone benefits and begins to prepare himself. During this time it becomes apparent that nothing goes with us beyond the grave but our life of virtue or sin. This startling reality will help to put all things during the course of our lives and those of our children's in proper perspective. And, as an aside, if the loved one has lost mental faculties, what a heart-breaking lesson for the family not to put off holiness and preparation for death until it's too late.

Finally, if the older generation is not even Catholic, then the family will have to pray harder and do more penance, all with confidence in Our Lord's words: "Ask and ye shall receive" and "The Lord does not delay in His promises, but for your sake is longsuffering, not wishing that any should perish but that all should turn to repentance" (II Peter 3:9). The key to conversion is a multitude of grace and the Catholic example that surrounds them. Most people learn from example, and none can resist until the bitter end, being surrounded by true love of God from the outside and their own conscience from the inside. Truly they are sandwiched! And we are consoled that "God willeth not the death of a sinner but that he be converted and live." Because they dwell in the same home, the loved one will participate in your Catholic family life, which includes interaction with the clergy as well as family prayers. All of this will have the most profound impact on the soul so desperately in need.

So, when the opportunity presents itself and God wills that we increase our family's number by welcoming the older generation into our home, rejoice! It's not really our home anyway since everything is God's and He shares it all with us (except our sins–we can claim those. Ugh!) As parents, our attitude of "Thy will be done" flows over onto everyone and is the greatest help we can give to all involved with embracing a "move in" situation. At this moment, let us imagine ourselves before Almighty God at judgment, and when He says: "I needed a place to live and someone to care for Me. Did you take Me in?" How do we want to be able to answer Him?..."He that receiveth you receiveth Me." What a privilege!

BY GABRIEL A. DE ERAUSQUIN, M.D.

On Aging, Dementia, and the Catholic Physician

All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts
His act being seven ages. At first the infant
Mewing and puking in the nurse's arms;...

At the time of Shakespeare, the perspective of a "second childhood," melancholy and all, was a rare one. The life span of men was at the time several years–or even decades–shorter, and thus few ever reached the "last scene of all" of which Lord Jacques tells us. In recent years, by contrast, the steady increase in life expectancy has turned late aging in a commonly experienced phenomenon. Indeed, just in the United States over three million people can boast of having seen World War I, and the number of persons aged 85 or older is predicted to continue to increase towards the beginning of the next century.

In industrialized countries, this remarkable trend compounds a severe drop in birth rates, largely due to artificial contraception and systematic killing of the young through abortion, giving origin to a phenomenon known as population aging. In short, this means that the proportion (or ratio) of the young to the old

is becoming a smaller and smaller number. It should not be surprising then that funding institutions and governments have taken an interest in research oriented to unravel the mysteries of aging. This quest was branded in a recent review published in the highly prestigious journal *Science* as *"The Search for Methuselah,"* and spans from genetic studies in flies, through molecular biology of worms, studies on aging rodents and monkeys, and studies of the human brain. In its most radical form, these scientific endeavors aspire to the arrest of the process of aging. More moderate scientists content themselves with:

> ...discovering ways to block age-related disorders of higher cortical function without necessarily prolonging life [so as to] enable many of the elderly to remain independent and enjoy life well beyond the eighth decade. [1]

By "disorders of higher cortical function" the author refers to a series of changes in cognitive ability such as slowing in problem solving and other intellectual processing, as well as mild to moderate decreases in memory, all of which are common in normal aging. When these changes accelerate, they lead to "impaired memory, judgment, abstraction and language," a picture known to physicians as dementia.

The Problem of Dementia: Its Magnitude

How common is dementia? Although numbers vary slightly from one study to another, there is by now solid evidence showing that the prevalence of dementia increases in each decade of life after age 60, from about 4 cases in 1,000 at age 60 to more than 20% at ages 85 or older.[1] Although sometimes the symptoms are due to reversible, treatable causes (e.g.: medication side effects, lack of certain vitamins, metabolic imbalances, certain brain tumors and infections, or blood clots on the inner side of the skull pressing on the brain from the outside) this occurs in only about 5% of all cases. In all the rest, dementia is caused by diseases having distinct processes that result in specific and excessive irreversible deterioration of certain parts of the brain.

Alzheimer's disease accounts for over 60% of about 4 million cases of dementia currently in the United States, and has thence been the focus of much attention by basic scientists, epidemiologists and clinicians. Its importance for public health is so big that it led to the creation of a special Advisory Panel, mandated by law to report before Congress between 1989 and 1992. This Panel was charged with reporting on the progress made on the field as well as with suggesting public policies oriented to ameliorate it.[2] With the increasing aging of society the number of cases of dementia will continue to increase, concomitantly increasing the already staggering cost, both personal and societal of the illness. One of the notable features of this disease is that it affects people of all ethnic, cultural and racial heritages and of all socio-economic conditions.[2] However, some protection appears to be afforded by education, since more educated people seem to have a lower risk of becoming ill (this "protective effect" from continued intellectual activity is not well understood, but it can be interpreted in the light of classical psychology as explained below).

But, What Is Alzheimer's Disease? A Few Precisions

Alois Alzheimer was a nineteenth century French neuropathologist who first described the most common of the dementias, which now is named after him. He noticed that when a patient showed severe senile deterioration early in adult life, his or her brain was full of abnormal structures that were described by their microscopical appearance as neurofibrillary tangles and senile plaques. Since Alzheimer's time, it has become generally accepted that the same abnormal process accounts for senile deterioration at later stages of life. The progressive accumulation of those plaques and tangles leads, by a mechanism which remains largely unclear, to the death of numerous nerve cells (neurons) in regions of the brain associated with memory and integration of experience. The loss of those neurons eventually results in the classical, astounding picture of a

> ...person whose ability to walk, eat and have sensations is essentially unaffected, but who cannot make sense of the world,[1]

and who

> ...progressing beyond the initial phases of forgetfulness...ultimately ...becomes entirely helpless, losing control over bodily functions, incapable of self-help.[2]

This progression in the degree of incapacitation, with the concomitant increase in reliance upon caregivers, usually takes 6 to 8 years (although periods of illness as long

Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
And shining face, creeping like snail
Unwilling to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like a furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
full of strange oaths, and bearded like the bard,
Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking to bubble reputation,
Even in the cannon's mouth....

as 20 years have been reported).[2]

Alzheimer's disease is at least partly inherited, but attempts at identifying a single gene, or even a few, responsible for that inheritance have been unsuccessful or not easy to reproduce. There are several technical explanations for that fact, which are however out of the scope of this commentary. Nonetheless, some associations between inheritance of specific genes and transmission of the disease have been reported in familial cases, although the genes seem to be different in different families.[2] Many molecular abnormalities have been found in the brains of patients with Alzheimer's disease, but it would seem that the foremost difference between senile dementia and normal aging is the speed at which each occurs, the former being much faster. Thus, the brain of a 90-year-old person deceased after keeping all his intellectual faculties in full power also contains abnormal structures typical of Alzheimer's dementia, but in much smaller numbers. A host of other facts of the same nature could be pointed out, like the reduction in numbers of neurons, or accumulations of defects in the molecules that contain genetic information (so called nucleic acids), both of which are also present in normal aging. Evidence on what bearing all these multiple anatomic and functional age-related changes have on the mind in normal people is generally lacking, and a leading scientist in the field, Dennis Selkoe (in his article already quoted) thinks that:

> In many people the answer may be 'very little.'[1]

One important recent development in the medical aspects of Alzheimer's disease has been the development of a very easy diagnostic test (consisting simply on a modified eye exam) which allows sure identification of the illness, by showing an exaggerated response to pharmacologic stimulation. This is an important step, since diagnosis of Alzheimer's could only be accomplished by very invasive testing up to now.

Browsing Psychology On Mind and Brain

In any case, the question remains as to what is known about the relationship between the faculties of the mind and the brain. This fascinating problem has a history as long as that of philosophy. Already the early Greek thinkers devoted writings to it, which were critically reviewed and structured in a complete theory by Aristotle of Stagyra. Aristotelian psychology forms the backbone of the school known as moderate realism, but also of modern empiricism and to some extent of modern phenomenology, so it seems appropriate to turn now to a brief description of its main features in order to properly address this question.

First, it is worth pointing out that for Aristotle, psychology is the part of Physics (i.e., it is concerned with natural objects), being dedicated in particular to study those natural objects which are alive. The Philosopher approaches the problem by describing the four kinds of causes or explanations of living things. In fact:

> ...causes are spoken of in four senses. In one sense, they say the substance, or the essence, is the cause (...); in another, it is the matter or the underlying subject; in a third, the source which begins the motion; and in the fourth (...), the final cause or the good (for this is the end of every generation and every motion).[3]

> The soul is the cause and principle of a living body (...) in three specified senses of "cause"... as a source of motion, and as final cause, and as the substance of the animated body.[4]

Natural substances are composites of matter and *form*, and the proper definition of the soul is then:

> ...the first actuality of a natural body which has organs,[5]

...the latter (i.e., the natural organic body) being the fourth (material) cause.

The simplest such *form* is the nutritive soul, which is the form of plants. Complexity is added in the *form* of animals by the addition of the powers of sensation, imagination and memory. Finally, in man, intellect is added. To each of these powers belongs a moving cause; nutrition, assimilation and growth are the movers in plants; desire and locomotion in animals; and in man also thought and the cause of thought the active intellect, which:

> ...alone can be separated from the body, just as that which is eternal can be separated from that which is destructible[6].

If only the active intellect can be separated from the body, it follows that all other powers of the soul are properties of the composite, and hence cannot operate in a defective organ. The same is true regarding the affections of the soul, like meekness, fear, pity, gladness, love and hate, which exist with the body and indeed are:

> ...forms subsisting in the matter.[7]

St Thomas Aquinas comments on this point as follows:

> From these follow two clarifications: one, that understanding is an operation proper to the soul which does not require the body except as its object (...) whereas seeing, and other properties and operations belong not only to the soul, but to the composite. The second, that that which contains in itself the operation contains also the act of being

And then the justice,
In fair round belly with good capon lin'd.
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws and modern instances
And so he plays his part....

(*esse*) and the subsistence (...) Therefore, the intellect is a subsistent form, whereas all of the other powers are forms *in the matter.* (emphasis mine)[8]

...and subject to corruption and disease (emphasis mine).

Thus, sensation, imagination, memory and the elementary operations of the passive intellect which have the brain (and the nervous system in general) as their organ, would not be possible when the brain is severely ill. When this occurs, the integration of experience is severely disrupted, giving rise to illnesses which can affect primarily memory (amnesia), primarily perception (agnosia), primarily language (aphasia) or primarily the execution of planned motor behavior (apraxia). When all of the above functions are affected simultaneously, dementia ensues.

Experience is the Bridge Between Memory and Intellect

How is experience integrated? This problem, which has been the focus of much attention recently as a consequence of the so-called "neuroscience revolution," has also been extensively dealt with by several philosophical schools, including moderate realism. Aristotle speaks about it in the beginning of *Metaphysics*:

All animals, except men, live with the aid of appearances and memory, and they participate but little in experience; but the race of men lives also by art and judgment. In men, experience comes into being from memory, for many memories of the same thing result in the capacity for one experience. And experience seems almost similar to science and art, but science and art come to men through experience.[9]

Thus, the Philosopher understands experience as a certain habitual knowledge originated mostly through the senses, which becomes the source of theoretical abstractions (arts and science) through inductive reasoning. Perhaps not so surprisingly this notion is largely shared by modern empiric scientists of materialistic extraction (who discuss it under the general label of "consciousness"). For example, Michael Posner, in an article published late last year in the very prestigious Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA, argues that *"an understanding of consciousness"* should be pursued by appreciating the way the human brain achieves:

...selection of sensory information, activa[tion] of ideas stored in memory, and maintain[ance] of an alert state.[10]

Along the same lines, the Nobel Prize Winner Francis Crick–a hard core materialist–has argued that consciousness is synonymous with awareness, whether of objects on the external world or of internal concepts, and entails the operation of a mechanism combining attention and memory.[11]

In fact, if consciousness is equated with experience as a vital actuality, the conclusions of modern research fully confirm Aristotle's speculation. However, experience is *not only* a vital actuality but also a cognitive habit, as explained before. This concept is further developed by St. Thomas Aquinas, who specifies the power (or faculty) by which such habit is acquired: the *cogitative.* Operation of the cogitative power is intellectual in that it entails a certain practical judgment regarding perception and memory (e.g., if it has happened before, to which kind it belongs, and so on). However, its operation occurs in the composite (we know now that in fact its organ is the brain), and in consequence is not separable. Through the operation of the cogitative power, experience becomes the source of scientific knowledge, by means of induction.

What The Physician Can Do

So, what happens in dementia? It may now be easier to understand that when the brain suffers:

...structural changes in neurons and their extensions, [they] contribute to a progressive disconnection of neural circuits serving memory and thinking (...) [which] helps lead to the impaired memory, judgment, abstraction and language that is too familiar in Alzheimer's patients.[1]

Deterioration occurs without loss of faculties, but rather through the inability of the same to exert their operation in a defective organ. Let's look at an example. In people who develop deafness because of lesions in the auditory organ of Corti (cells responsible for translating mechanical stimuli generated by the sound into nerve impulses degenerate), operation of the faculty of hearing is lost, but the faculty itself remains. This can be proven because implantation of a very crude electronic device which translates input (sound) in a range several orders of magnitude smaller than that of the organ of Corti (i.e., the biological transducer), can lead to full recovery of function, including the ability of speaking correctly. This recovery is accompanied by extensive remodelling of the brain connec-

The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side
His youthful nose well sav'd, a world too wide
for his shrunk shunk, and his big manly voice,
Turning toward childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound....

tions and the creation of a new physical representation of auditory sensations in the brain. This kind of plasticity is the reason for most of the optimism in finding treatment for dementia. Indeed, it seems as if the soul had limitless ability to reorganize the operation of its faculties, provided a minimally adequate organ is provided.

At present, however, only marginally successful attempts have been made at improving the function of demented patients by medical treatments, and most of the hope is focused on developing medications which could arrest, or at least significantly slow down, the disease process.[12] A few such medications are already in early stages of clinical application, such as drugs that enhance cognition, or so called nerve growth factors (and other drugs with unrelated mechanisms) which could prevent the progression of nerve cell death.[12] In the meantime, the role of the physician is restricted in the first place to establishing the diagnosis, a very important step indeed, since on the one hand the same symptoms can be caused by reversible medical illnesses, and, on the other, early diagnosis may be the only case in which current medications are helpful. Secondly, the doctor has a role in supporting and orienting the family, and in providing prevention for severe complications such as accidental injury, malnutrition and infections, all of which occur far more easily in demented people.

The last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
In the second childishness and mere oblivion;
sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

Lord Jacques in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (Act II)

Thou Shalt Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother

What to do, then, when one of our own is affected by this devastating illness? St. Thomas says:

> After God, parents and our fatherland constitute principles of our being and government because we have been born from the former and raised in the latter. Therefore, after God, we owe the most to our parents and to our fatherland.[13]

This is the origin of the virtue of piety (*pietas*) by which we honor and serve our parents far beyond the exigence of justice, because there is no real proportion between what we can give back to them and what we actually owe them as our duty. Piety is somehow alike to the virtue of religion, and this likeness is not related to the end or object of the action, but to the human impossibility to reach a measure of retribution to either God or his parents. Hence, no sacrifice or task should be too big or too imposing when the object of our service is one of our parents.

It seems at times hard to reconcile the knowledge of the existence of a perfect, incorruptible intellect, with the view of this person we once knew, now "in second childhood and mere oblivion." Nonetheless, we know that somehow the separable part of their soul is still there, shining in the darkness of a body now turned into a trap. That knowledge should suffice to cease not in our efforts to communicate our love to them. Modern man by his selfishness has lost all ability to see this truth, and equating appearance and essence, operation and faculty, can degrade himself to write, as the congressional Advisory Panel did, that:

> ...dementing disorders progress without mercy, robbing the sufferer of memory, of capacity, of ***humanity*** (emphasis mine).[2]

From here to euthanasia there is nothing but a short leap, for why not kill them if they are not human? God punishes the wise with blindness and confuses their understanding. The same Panel went on to say that:

> No individual family is prepared emotionally, and very few economically, to care for an [Alzheimer's disease]-afflicted relative; studies have shown that caring for a demented relative is among the most difficult forms of family responsibility, producing severe strain and potentially destructive effects on families that undertake caregiving.[2]

Although this statement may be well-meaning, I certainly hope that Catholic families will be an exception to this rule. The bigger the cross, the greater the graces that Our Lord grants the bearer, and the higher his or her place in heaven. The measure of our giving shall be all that we can give, and if we do it with righteous love, God will pay us hundredfold in our celestial home. Ω

1. Selkoe *D. Scientific American*. September 1992.
2. Fourth Report of the Advisory Panel on Alzheimer's Disease. A Report to the US Congress and the US Department of Health and Human Services. National Institute of Mental Health, National Institutes of Health, February 1 993.
3. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 983a24-34
4. Aristotle, *On the Soul*, II, 415 b 8-11.
5. Aristotle, *On the Soul*, II, 41 2b5
6. Aristotle, *On the Soul*, 41 3b25
7. Aristotle, *On the Soul*, I, 403a17
8. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on On the Soul*, Lectio II, 20
9. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 980b-981 a
10. Posner M., Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, USA, 91 :7398-7403, 1994
11. Crick F and Koch S, *Scientific American*, Sept.92; see also July 1994.
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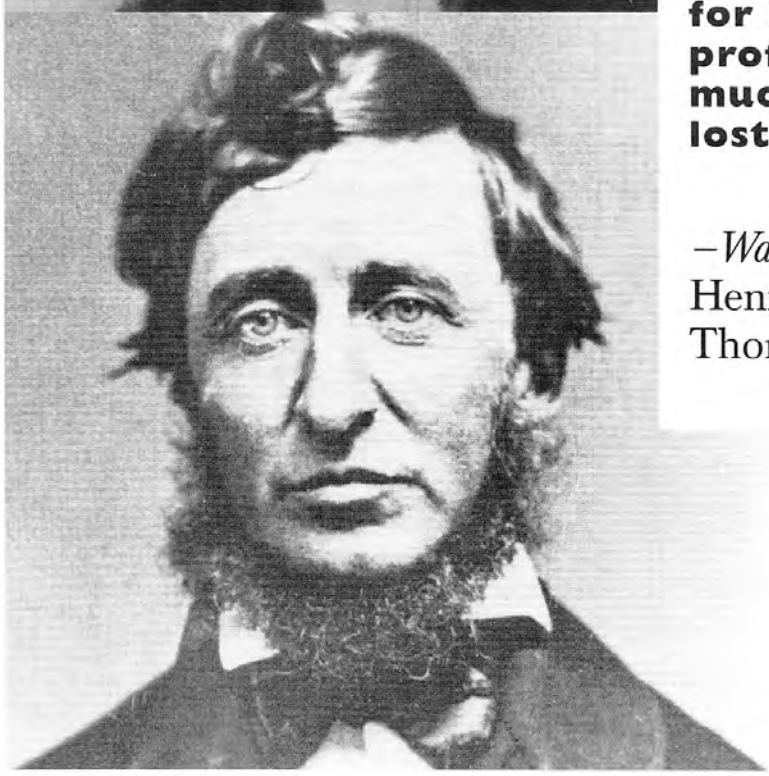
BY EDWIN FAUST

On Olden Pond



Age is no better, hardly so well, qualified for an instructor as youth, for it has not profited so much as it has lost.

–Walden Pond, Henry David Thoreau

Thoreau stands near the beginning of our republic and the generation he dismisses as bereft of practical wisdom is not far removed from our Founding Fathers. As early as the early part of the 19th century then, the *novus ordo saeculorum* had become a tiresome thing to some of its heirs, for whom the champions of the masonic revolution appeared as unremarkable old men, peddling uninspiring ideas. This contempt for the older generation that found a voice in Thoreau's writings is not solely the eccentricity of an antisocial author who preferred the company of muskrats to men, but an attitude that runs like a thread through the fabric of America's popular culture. It weaves its way through time from the shores of Walden Pond to the studio lots of Hollywood, where young rebels may be without a cause, but never without a film contract.

In his low esteem for his elders, as in other things, Thoreau is the progenitor of much that is bad and even bizarre in our national life. The faithless child of Protestant individualism, he preferred not only his own thoughts, but his own company. He retreated for two years to the wilderness, where he chronicled his random musings along with detailed and occasionally rhapsodic observations of the doings of beavers and woodcocks and groundhogs. He also punctuated his now famous book with denunciations of the commercialism then strangling the country. (This was is the 1840's), yet he could provide no remedy for it other than his own brand of materialism, which centered on a neopagan contemplation of nature. In this, he foreshadowed those earth-worshipping zealots of the present day who vilify most human enterprises and style themselves environmentalists.

What Thoreau had against the older generation was that they surrendered their lives to mortgage holders and money lenders for the sake of fine furniture, "geegaws and doodads," as he put it, and ignored the spiritual and poetic dimensions of life. He believed, quite rightly, that America was producing misshapen men, stunted creatures who had never taken their own measure nor bothered to ask the larger questions. Why should he respect people simply because they had grown older if they had not also grown wiser? But what wisdom did Thoreau ultimately bequeath to the future?

For all of his fulminations about time wasted on trivialities, he never managed to enunciate what comprises the genuinely important business of life. "Simplify," he said. But if we do not know the end of our journey, how can we simplify wisely? We may very well throw away that which may later prove essential. Thoreau appeared to hunger for a unified vision of life, but it was not so consuming a hunger as to dispose him to the humility truth requires of her children before she will nourish them. He clung to the superior attitude of an agnosticism that has forever characterized our liberal culture. He indulged himself in a sort of New Age search for truth, peppering his writings with eclectic sententiae from Oriental literature–Confucius, Shankaracharya, the Bhagavad Gita–but he committed himself to nothing. Perhaps, his Harvard education had not furnished him with a knowledge of the metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas, and the mystifications of Hinduism were the closest he ever came to a philosophy of being. In any event, Thoreau appears in the end to be condemned by his own standard. He, too, failed to have any cogent or coherent view of the meaning and direction of human existence to pass on to his progeny. He, too, had not profited with age so much as he had lost, yet he and his writings endure as the perennial accusation of youth against their elders: You have served Mammon, and sold your souls, and left us spiritually disinherited.

But it does not profit us to find the spiritual accounts of others to be wanting if we, too, lack faith and fortitude. Thoreau may have seen clearly that the old people about him had never properly filled out as men and remained, as it were, in stages of arrested spiritual development, freaks with shriveled souls, but he was not able to tell us what a man might look like whose life had been a progress of grace and goodness. He simply did not know and, ultimately, one might wonder on which side of the stage he stood in the freak show he reviewed so mercilessly.

The Whole Man

A Catholic writer of this century was once asked why she wrote so much about freaks. Flannery O'Connor replied that it was probably because she was still able to recognize one. She also claimed this as an ability of other Southern writers in the US and ascribed it to the fact that the definition of a man in the South was still "theological." A man was measured by his relationship to ultimate goodness, by the virtues he manifested, the faith he lived. It is this kind of measure that Thoreau seems to have been seeking, but the North no longer looked at man theologically, if it ever had.

O'Connor acknowledged that the Protestantism of what H.L. Mencken called "the Bible Belt" produced many distorted images of Christ, but maintained that a distorted image is better than no image, and that Catholic truth might find more fertile ground in Dixie than in the North, where unbelief reigned in near invincibility.

The South, as she saw it, still existed in something of a cultural unity, badly battered, but intact, and that unity persisted as a remnant of Christendom. "I think it is safe to say that while the South is hardly Christ-centered, it is Christ-haunted," she said. But even the ghost of Love is enough to soften the hardness of men's hearts. It is

perhaps why eccentricity is accepted more readily in the South. If a man is the image of God, who are we to object to the shape the Creator chooses to impress upon that image? It is also probably why family tends to be stronger and old people more apt to find a home within the family, and to live there not in the shame of dependence, but in the authority of age. This can even be seen in the more profane literature of the region. "Big Daddy" may be something of a moral monster, but he is quite naturally the *pater familias*, with the strength of social convention behind his authority.

No Southerner who reads his Bible is unaware of the numerous commands in the Old Testament that the old be respected, nor of the exhortation in the New Testament to see Christ in all men. Every Catholic who knows and lives his faith is also possessed of this knowledge. Yet, old people tend to fair more poorly at the hands of the young, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, all of the time. Religious culture, even in today's South, tends to become submerged in the tidal wave of secularism that inundates the continent. Individuals of faith endure, but communities of faith perish. And only in communities of faith can the family elders find true honor and love.

The Crowded Wilderness

Civilized men live together; savages prefer solitude. Such was the thought of G.K.Chesterton, and although he was speaking of the physical conditions of societies, he saw that those conditions are extensions of the spiritual domain. Thoreau's disapproval of the shallow and commercial mindset to be met in America would certainly have received a sympathetic hearing from Chesterton; his antisocial individualism would not. For Thoreau, the answer to a society with a failing and insufficient faith was withdrawal; for Chesterton, it was conversion to truth.

Chesterton knew that what transforms individuals into a group is a common creed; what divorces individuals from a group is singularity of belief. The modern world presents us with the paradox of men both simultaneously joined in physical community and isolated in creedal solitude. We now suffer the odd and unprecedented condition of being grouped together in a highly organized material culture peopled largely by spiritual savages.

Thoreau saw the beginnings of this condition and dramatized, perhaps unwittingly, that creedal solitude with his physical solitude. But the Catholic, even when he turns away from the world, does so in religious communities. The Catholic is not a spiritual savage, but a man of shared culture. He knows that when we love God we also love our neighbor. It is mighty hard to love one's neighbor when one has not got any. Equally hard is it to love a neighbor one never comes to know, save on superficial terms. The tragedy of the modern American family is that it is most often condemned to this sort of superficiality in the relations among its own members, for a family whose life is not based on a common faith is necessarily consigned to the same eventual disintegration that afflicts society at large.

Traditional Catholics whose family lives are faith-centered may appear increasingly odd against the backdrop of contemporary culture, somewhat like the Amish in the Pennsylvania Dutch Country. But the Amish have endured, ruled by their elders, and preserved by their faith, however mistaken that faith may be in the main. How much brighter are the prospects for Catholic families that band together in the fullness of truth. How much brighter the end for men who grow holier as they grow older. And to give Thoreau his due, perhaps the young have some right to expect a spiritual inheritance from their elders; perhaps, they have some right to expect the light of eternity to shine some slim beam on their own perplexity as it opens to admit their fathers; perhaps, the old can only be loved by men in the measure that they have loved God.

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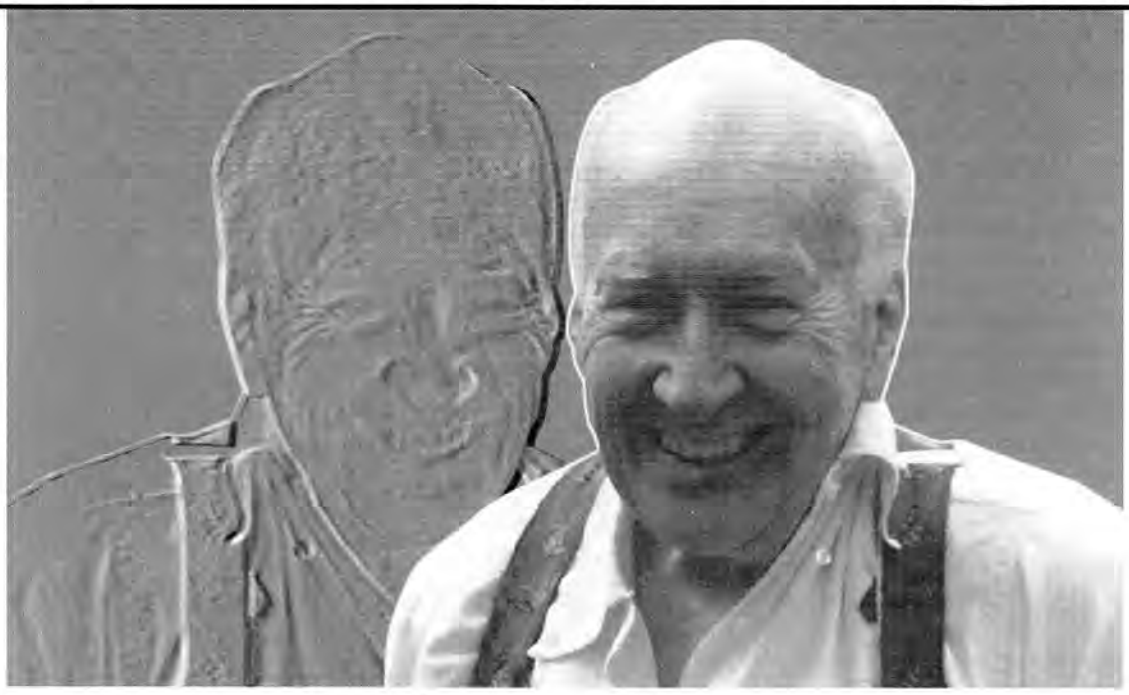
BY DR. FREDERICK D. WILHELMSEN



Old Age & Wisdom

Why and how the two should go together.

When is a man old? George Burns tells us that a man is old when he stoops down to tie a shoe lace and then looks around to see if there is anything else on the floor that needs picking up. Burns ought to know: he claims to be ninety-eight years old. For my part, on my seventieth birthday I noticed that I must be old because everybody new I met looked like somebody else I knew. Possibly a man is old when his remote past, his childhood and times long forgotten, now swarm back into memory to both trouble and bless his declining years. One truth does stand out. In our time age has become relative. I am reminded of Papa Joe. Papa was a flaming red-headed gentleman without a trace of grey in his hair. Certainly advanced in age, he owned and ran a fine little Italian restaurant not far from my home. Blue-eyed and blond of skin, he was born in Calabria in the deep south of the peninsula. He belied everything I knew about Italy south of Naples where the men are short and swarthy. Insisting, to my disbelief, that he had served in the Italian army in World War I as a trumpeter, he dispelled my doubts by showing me a faded photograph of himself as a boy, trumpet in hand, and uniformed as they then were. He died the other day at age ninety-four and I don't know and never will whether he was ever old at all. Then again, how many of us have known people who insisted that we guess their age and having done so discover that they are a good ten

years older than we had estimated. This can be embarrassing as is indeed the fact itself of old age in our time.

Nobody wants to be old and the national obsession with diets and the rest bespeak a massive attack against growing old gracefully, as it was once called. When we do honor age we do so by denying it. Witness the laudable efforts to remove the legal age limit on the time we can continue to work. What this does, in effect, is deny that a man is truly old, to assert that he can still keep up with the young in the marketplace. But to be honored simply because you are old seems foreign to the spirit of the time. The insurance gimmick projected on the television screen always shows a couple, arm in arm, facing the sunset as they fade into "The Golden Years." She is always beautifully coiffured, if white haired; he is slender and athletic, looking as if he just left the barber shop. There are a few wrinkles, of course, but the couple heads towards the horizon where they will do everything they always wanted to do: golf, swim, fish. The social security is paid by the clock month after month. Pensions are good, investments secure. The swimming pool is trim and full. The Love Boat vacations are ahead and even death is thwarted of its sting because the funeral is already paid for, in advance.

How many of you, good readers, have known any such couples, a couple without cancer, heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's, and wheel-chairs? I am certain that a few such lucky folk are around but their very presence in our midst reminds us of their exceptional good fortune. Absent from these televised visions of a felicitous and untroubled old age is not only infirmity and the degradation by which the old are often afflicted, but as well the subsequent humiliations that follow in their wake. Old age is indeed honored provided the old are able to pretend that they are young. Youth triumphant and exalted. Old age banished! This gnostic panacea promising a tardy heaven on earth is not only fed us daily, but it fattens the wallets of the purveyors of this earthly paradise. Were this dream removed, our economy would probably collapse in a matter of days.

I am not suggesting that the remedy for this shimmering and glittering lie consists in falling down and just giving in to the decrepitude that is the future of most of us. Youth needs no justification because it justifies itself. We all prefer youth to age. George Bernard Shaw once remarked that the only thing wrong with youth was that it was given to children, and in truth we find youth appreciated, even loved, when it is about to disappear.

The question we ought to ask is: does old age have anything of worth and dignity in itself which is ***not*** an imitation of youth or a prolongation of youth beyond its own normal span? Is there some kernel of goodness simply in being old which is not a repetition of what went before? If we try to answer the question restricting our consideration to the biological side of life we have to answer in the negative. Biologically, everything (or almost everything) good to be said lies on the side of full maturity which is not precisely youth but which is certainly as well not old age.

Our answer, if indeed we find one, must lie somewhere in the interior of the human soul, that which differentiates us from whatever animating forces can be found within the animal and vegetable world lying below us. Here I fix upon what might be the door opening into the depths of the spirit: ***memory***. It would be absurd to assert as did the Cartesian mechanists that brute animals have no memory. Anybody who owns a pet dog or cat is soon aware of the power of animal memory. But memory in the living world beneath rationality consists in mere retention of past images and the experiences formed of them. Closely related to what Aristotle called "the estimative power" and what we call in modern English "instinct," memory is never reflected upon and known to be a past, not a present. The past *qui* past is known only by the human intelligence, which has the power not only to retain the past but to fix it before a man who can evaluate it as a moment of time which once was but no longer is except, by definition, in the cognitive act which thinks it in the now. Thus the scholastics wisely distinguished between sense and intellectual memory. The first is a power of retention and the second is one of the many activities exercised by the mind. By a remarkable paradox, the past, what no longer is, now is again and made present to the soul as it lives a new life in the spirit, a new being.

By no means is this capacity to recapture the past a mere by-product or addendum to human experience. On the contrary, memory is essential to the very development of the full life of both intelligence and will. We do not understand in a void, but in and through the sensorial world. This is so true that the Common Doctor insisted that the human soul in a purely natural state separated from the body could learn nothing new; hence the mysterious conundrum of a soul separated from the body but without the supernatural life of Beatitude. What would it do?

Nowhere is this more powerfully experienced than in the case of amnesia, where the continuity of life is sundered and men and women so afflicted have to begin all over again, without a name, with no remembered history. Such wounded people are shadows of what they once were. When this forgetfulness, a disease in the individual, has become a corporate infirmity, then society is truly sick.

We suffer nationally that sickness today. The time is gone when traditionalists such as Hilaire Belloc could complain that we live in an age when men and women no longer remember their grandparents and do not even know the names of their great grandparents. Today in the broad underworld of both slums and suburbia, they often do not

even know the names of their fathers; and whatever dim memory some of these youngsters have of those who beget them is lost in the remote past of a childhood full of degradation and shame, poverty and abuse, of a time without love and better forgotten than remembered, for the memory thereof brings with it searing pain and adds to the hate and loneliness stalking the inner city.

The old are the custodians of the past. Let this not be considered merely as a pleasant relish to the salad of life. In a profound sense nobody–be he young or old–can live in the present because the present becomes a past the moment we think about it. The future, in turn, structures the direction of our past because we remember what is of use to our futures and discard the rest as useless baggage. Show me what a man recalls of his past and I will tell you, down almost to the last detail, what his future will be. Show me what a society remembers of **its** past and I can predict, with reasonable expectation, its future. If a civilization remembers its saints, its future will be full of saints. But who today remembers the saints? The very future even while it feeds off the past, structures it. For this reason, we forget ninety-nine percent if not more of what happened to us in the past. No man can remember with accuracy more than a sliver of what he did yesterday, nor can a society. But that sliver makes the future even as it is recovered from oblivion by a decision made in the present.

Aristotle saw all this but he saw it dimly because he did not know the Incarnation. He told us that if we would exhort men to greatness and, *a fortiori*, the regimes in which they live, our statesmen must hold before us as paradigms tales of our heroes, as examples urging us to greatness. The future as such is a total blank, sheer possibility and hence without existence. We act to shape it into being only with materials at our hand. These materials, by necessity, are experiences undergone in the past. As I once put it: we back into the future with our eyes riveted on the past. These eyes are the old, of those whose principal task in the years still given them is to remember and to teach what they remember, to weigh and evaluate the human condition for the sake of present action geared at forming into being a future.

The old can be geniuses and they can break through and go beyond the boundaries of knowledge hitherto possessed in science or philosophy, technology or art. But so, too, can the young: there are both old and young men of genius. The capacity to invent, to discover, to innovate, is not restricted to any age. Descartes invented analytic geometry when he was a young man. Einstein already formulated his famous equation of matter and energy before he was a young man employed by academia. Houseman wrote his best poetry when a young man employed in a post office. Then again Beethoven composed his finest music when he as a very old man. But what pertains to the old and to them in a pre-eminent degree is experience. From this field plowed by the years they bring forth the crop that makes the wine. Old age ought to be the harvesting time of the human spirit.

As grapes are gathered into presses and become wine and as the vintner weighs their worth and separates the bad from the indifferent, the indifferent from the good, and even the good from the very good and then bottles them all, labeling them in order of their excellence, so too the old measure the fruit of experience and thus offer their wisdom to the world.

We may come to the old out of pity because disease has racked their bodies and seared their spirit: we proffer the love of charity. We may come to the old because of their scientific knowledge or their mastery of some aspect of reality. When we do so we approach them as we would approach anybody else in order that we might be instructed. But when we come to the old because of their experience we approach them in that which precisely makes them the custodians of the wisdom of the race of men. They and they alone have the experience needed to make them wise.

Not all of the old are wise, but very many of them are. This wisdom transcends science and consists in a capacity to judge, a habit of evaluation, a knack for discerning the useless as well as the false. They place the lesser good in its proper place, neither adjudicating it to be better than it is nor worse than it is. They crown with their approbation the good and they bow down before the best. Aristotle himself and Aquinas after him understood wisdom to be that supreme virtue of the intellect that orders everything we already understand and thus discovers order wherever it might exist and impose order wherever it is lacking. The first wisdom is the habit of being: metaphysics or first philosophy. The second, more to the point here, is the virtue of moral discernment, prudence. To this pertains history and our understanding of its import in the ebb and tide of human existence.

Senex, Age Senate: a gathering of the old, the body of men incarnating the experience and wisdom of a people. Every Senate, from its archetype in the old Roman Senate to its resonance in the capital of this nation bespeaks the essence of authority and a corporate recognition of the rights of truth in the public forum.

We come to the old who are wise because we seek instruction. In a sane society the initiative does not come from the old but from everybody else. This search for truth bespeaks society's recognition that the wise possess a body of truths we need to know. We ask questions of them and they answer out of the fullness of their wisdom. As the eminent Dr. Alvaro d'Ors in Spain puts it: Society is empowered to question the authority of the wise

and they, in turn, are thus authorized to answer, to speak. Often in the past this interplay of society and wisdom was institutionalized and crystallized politically. In every case this wisdom was recognized as living in a person, sons seeking counsel from fathers and in fathers seeking counsel from their fathers.

Contemporary society as we know it in the industrialized world is lacerated by more than one abomination. Among them all there does stand out a persistent, enduring refusal to honor age for what it is. By a curious irony, the old are often honored but always to the extent to which the old imitate the young, as I have pointed out. He doesn't act his age! He is young enough to work a few more years! He is a graybeard but look how agile he is! When the body creeks down and eventually collapses, modern medicine admirably bends its attention to palliating the attendant evils. But modern man is totally absent-minded about the claims of wisdom, found preeminently in the old, to be heard and heeded.

If we reflect upon this ingrained fallacy we can finger its flaws. In denying age any intrinsic worth, we thereby deny any intrinsic worth to that fullness of experience which is only possible to the old possibly because–in most cases–it takes plenty of time. From experience alone there emerges into existence that ordered memory from which we disengage principles capable of being crafted into premises from which moral conclusions are drawn. In a special way practical wisdom or prudence weighs the world and separates the wheat from the chaff. All old men do not possess wisdom. This is so obvious it is almost embarrassing to write it down. They are old fools. And all younger men do not lack wisdom. There are men wise before their time. But such wisdom is found generally in the old and this suffices for my argument.

Two grave and possibly insurmountable roadblocks lie in the way today, preventing the wisdom of the old from playing a significant role in the society of our time: The first and more important is the decline of the family in the past quarter century: mothers without fathers; children without parents; rampant divorce and uncontrollable sexual depravity. In some European countries where the family still retains a certain traditional stability, the family house–one owned and possessed free of crippling debt–remains the *Locus*, the Place, where all members of the family live well past childhood and until its younger members marry and set up a home of their own. Presiding over the family house, owned really by no one person but by the family as a unity, are the grandparents, and every familial decision demands, if not always their consent, then certainly their counsel. The old are listened to as a matter of course and the fruit of their long experience becomes a patrimony of the blood. (In old Basque law, for example, everything is owned familially and all properties are held in common.)

This daily proximity of the old, grandparents principally but aunts and uncles as well, renders it relatively easy to seek out their advice, to be instructed by their prudence. If the wisdom of the old must be heard in order that it might take on flesh, there is no better way to assure this than living together with young and old under the same roof. This prevents the isolation of young from mature, children from parents, and parents from grandparents.

Often Americans who know about this European situation complain about the lack of privacy with so many people hemmed into one building. But the complaint is without foundation. Those old European houses are large but are divided into many small rooms. The whole family gathers together at dinner, but has more privacy the rest of the day than we have in our houses dominated by a large "family" or "television" room which often prevents anybody from being alone at all. Granting the heavy leveling of European society in our time, the "generation gap" is avoided or at least attenuated.

This healthy social intercourse between all ages seems impossible in our country. Come graduation from high school, we all scatter and go our solitary ways. The aged too often find themselves alone, often shunted off to "residence homes" which are little more than hospitals for the sick and near prisons for the hearty who must "sign out" for a "pass" when they want to take a walk or go downtown for a beer or a show. The wisdom of the old thus withers in isolation from the young who need it but do not seek it.

Thus history is sliced horizontally in zones of time unrelated to one another. History as a vertical dimension of the spirit is lost. The old who could, for example, hand on their lived and seen experience are not there to do so. What most men today under seventy years old know about World War II they glean from television. They have no chance to sit down with the old and listen to them about the war or anything else. In terms of an example dear to the readers of *The Angelus*, we are fast approaching a time when the living memory of the old Latin Mass will have died, not because the Old Mass is so far distant in time, but because those under fifty or sixty years of age do not have any opportunity to talk to those who lived the better part of their lives in a Church still undisturbed by radical innovation and the flattening and debasing of its liturgy. The young could hear from those graybeards how they went "to the altar of God who gave joy to [their] youth."

Only yesterday, just a few years gone by, the last living survivors of the War Between the States died. They, as children, could have talked to very old men and women who remembered the American Revolution. And on back–we are, after all, only some twenty very long

generations from the Birth of Christ. This handing on of a history lived and remembered is truncated and even snuffed out by the isolation of the old from the rest of mankind. Thus the sap goes out of the life of everyone. Tales of heroes are not told to the young by the old. The sense of being born in the Great Depression and the internal agony suffered by a whole people is never heard about, never spoken of, because those who knew it–and they mount into the tens of millions–are not talked to by the majority of the nation. Tradition today is not something lived, but something we look up in a book at a library even as we are cut away from the living libraries walking about amongst us: the old.

One of the gems worked into the broach of wisdom is the awareness of contingency, of the fleetingness of things, of the precariousness and novelty of existence. In conventional iconography there figures a picture of an old man walking hand in hand with a child, his own grandchild. The old know what it is to be a contingent being: they have endured and still are. The prayer of thanksgiving is often on their lips as they bend their knees to pray. Paradoxically this experience of living in a contingent world unites the old to the very young, who also sense the world as perpetual novelty. The fishing pond down the road is exciting to grandfather because he knows he may not see it again. It is exciting to the child because he has never seen it.

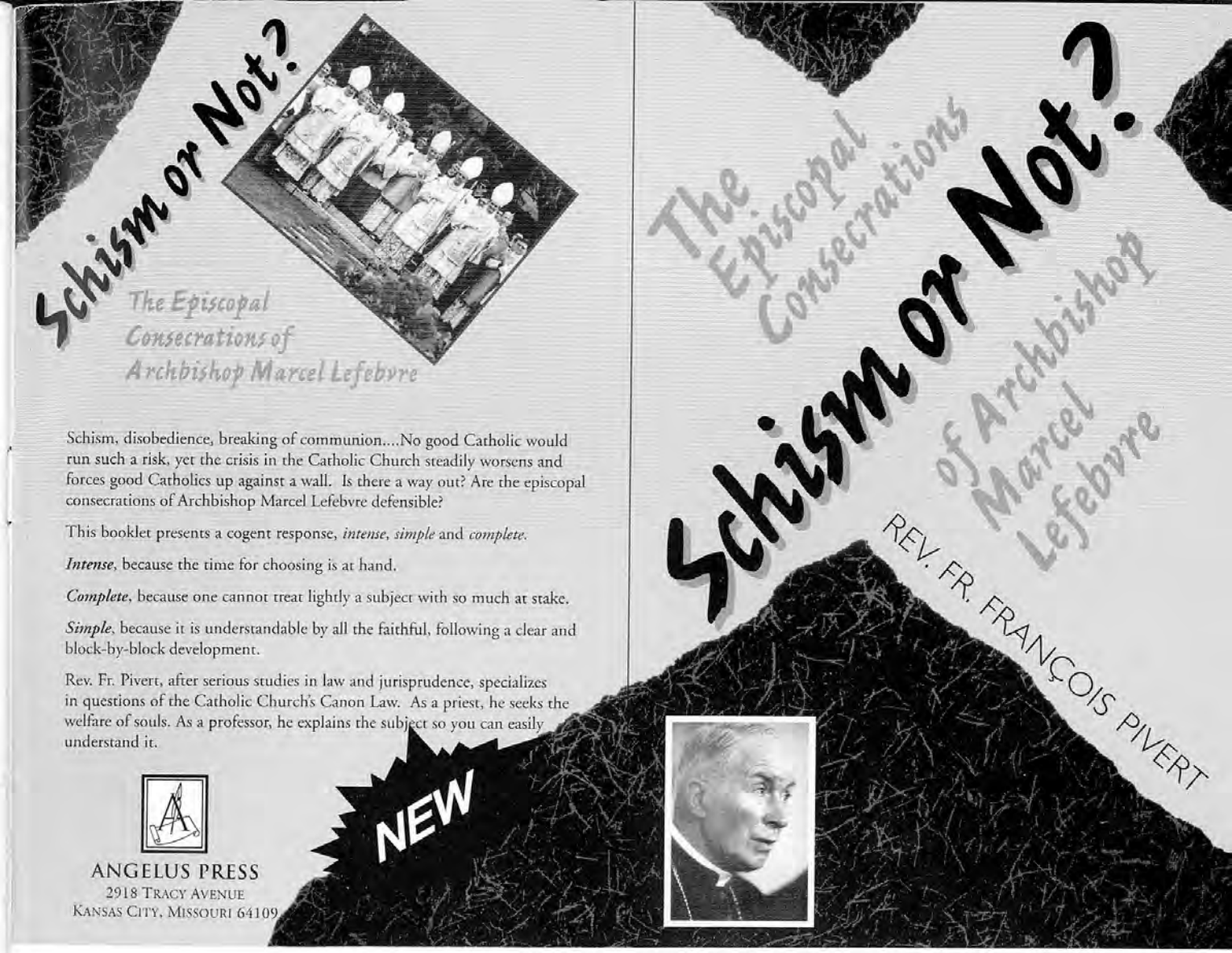
They head down the road together, companions in their celebration of being. This awareness of contingency is dimmed as we grow older. It only comes back when we are old. Civilization itself, at least in its material aspects, is an elaborate shield thrown up against contingency, all the way from traffic signals to medicine. Civilization is a trench we dig in order to hold off accidents and infirmity, decrepitude and death itself. But the newness of things, all fragile as chandeliers, suffuses the sensibility of children –and of old people as well. Children today are cheated in not knowing well their own grandparents, and grandparents are cheated of their right to give to these children their wisdom, for it is better to give than to receive.

The second roadblock against recognizing and appropriating the wisdom of the old is political. In no way are they represented before the powers of government in any institution which incarnates wisdom as a living voice to be heard for the common good of all of us. Given the present state of affairs it seems impossible that such a representation could ever be achieved. This would demand a dismantling of every democratic constitution in the world. In this last "Year of the Family," I have read many an excellent exhortation about the central role of the family in society, from authoritative declarations from the Vatican to reflections by bishops, laymen, and others, but nowhere have I read of the need to represent the family ***politically***. The democratic presumption that only the individual be given the vote undercuts the laudable efforts to place family life at the heart of society.

The family is still marginated politically. There is a contradiction between the democratic principle– one man, one vote–and the role of the family. If only the individual is represented at the polling booth, if only representatives of individuals (and parties) occupy positions of power, then all the talk about family "values" is so much guff. On the democratic presumption, only individuals exist politically. Were the family to be represented politically, considerable weight would have to be given the old as the presumed custodians of the wisdom of society. This will not happen however, not unless a Christian revolution would sweep away the past four hundred years.

But there is a sense deeper than all things political in which age imitates God Himself. We men, because we are temporal beings, have our very being parcelled out to us bit by bit. The past dies and it can only be retrieved by memory. I am substantially the same man I was at birth but this cannot quite be said of my being, my existence: otherwise the past–what no longer is–would be the present, a patent contradiction. Being, in turn, is always signified by the present sense, as St. Thomas Aquinas teaches us in his commentary on the *Perihermeneas* of Aristotle. We have already argued that this loss of the past is countered to a degree by memory and we have argued as well the proposition that the old are the guardians of memory. God, Whose Being is always a perpetual present, altogether without past or future, transcends the fleetingness of temporal existence. Were we eternal beings, our past would be our present and our future as well.

But we are not God Who is His Eternity. The Lord God remembers nothing because He does not have to. This Eternity is not a long time but the fullness of that Being who said of Himself to Moses: "I Am Who Am" and Who told a crowd of incredulous Jews that "before Abraham was, I Am," not a past or a future but a blazing flash of Existence, Eternal, ever new and ever old. St. Augustine, in his famous prayer on the beauty of God, did not write: "Oh, my Beauty, ever so New." He could have done so and it would have been true. But what he actually wrote was: "*Seri te amavi, O Pulchritudo, tam antiqua et tam nova, seri te amavi.*" Too late have I loved Thee, O My Beauty, so ancient and so new, too late have I loved Thee." God is thus imitated and honored not only by the youth of creation but by its antiquity. Since the future is a sheer blank it cannot honor God because the future as yet is nothing. But the past, as living again, in man, can offer Him glory in the new being given that past in us. Both young and old reflect Him, and that divine reflection by the old is their wisdom born and stirred in memory. And Wisdom too is a Divine Name. ✠



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