

THE PRIEST'S SIMPLICITY OF LIFE¹

Question: One issue on the agenda of the U.S. Bishops' 1971 spring meeting is "the relationship between priestly ministry and poverty." A particular aspect of that which intrigues me is the personal attitude of a priest toward simplicity in his own life-style. Are there available any concrete norms that one might consider as possibly applicable?

Answer: Yes. The Association of Pittsburgh Priests authorized a statement a few months ago which is down-to-earth and comprehensive. It is the only position paper I've seen on this important, current but neglected topic. And it goes a long way to implement the stirring invitation of Vatican II for priests "to embrace voluntary poverty" by which "they will be more clearly likened to Christ and will become more devoted to the sacred ministry." (Cf. *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, #17.) The Pittsburgh document is a convincing appeal, one that opens wide vistas and stimulates fresh thinking. I'll summarize it here.

Rarely in the history of the Church have priests been so much in the public eye as during the last decade. Controversies (and even disputes) centering on clerical celibacy, obedience, political action, social involvement, etc., have captured attention everywhere. Media of communication: films, TV and radio, the press—these have all served to popularize many facets of priestly life and concern, but the subject of "Christian simplicity" in the life of the priest has been by-passed. Chastity and obedience are not the only touchstones of priestly holiness or spirituality. The minister of Christ's gospel must also reflect the Master's spirit of detachment, and although no rigid rules can be formulated that will exactly fit everyone concerned, there can be no compromise with the principle of simplicity itself.

¹ From *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, June 1971.

While few can imitate exactly the parish priest St. John Vianney, yet the life-style of all should be as unmistakably simple as his.

It is a privilege to serve in a poor area. Too often in casual clerical conversation, the "best" parish is equated with one that is affluent, well equipped with fine buildings and possessing what the world calls "prestige." This is not to deny that all classes must be ministered to by the Church, nor is it to denigrate a large parochial plant. But it is to say very clearly that priests should see the poorest parish as "the best parish."

Even when a priest is duly assigned to a relatively affluent parish, he can serve the poor there also by developing in the congregation a deeper Christian attitude toward the poor in general. While the poor must make their own decisions and try to solve their own problems, the "tools" by which this can be done will often come from those who are better situated economically.

Priests in every area should seek out and become the special friends of the poor; the last man to whom the disadvantage should be "invisible" is the priest himself. This requires a willingness to assist the poor to achieve their right to "the means necessary and suitable for the proper development of life," in the words of John XXIII. (*Pacem in Terris*, XIII, # 11.) This will involve the priest in the struggle to end degrading poverty and injustice. It also includes a certain *identification* with the poverty of Christ on the priest's part, a simplicity that evokes concrete expressions.

This Pittsburgh statement invites fellow priests to reject the title of honor of "monsignor." The statement views it as a relic of Middle Age royal courts, and suggests instead that a simple medal — like the Congressional Medal of Honor — be awarded to priests for signal accomplishments in the service of God and man.

So far as style of life is concerned, priests who accept the statement agree: a) to own only a low-priced automobile; b) such items as TV and radio will be sparing and simple; c) when traveling, to use simple accommodations, and when vacationing, to avoid what is luxurious; d) not to belong to any country

club or upper middle class private club (doubly so because virtually all of these practice racial and religious discrimination in their membership policies, nor to use the facilities thereof.

Finances — Savings and investments will be modest. Moreover, one stands ready to give generously at a moment's notice when an evident need arises in the Church or the wider community. No loophole will be sought to avoid taxes, including on Mass stipends.

Housing — Those associating themselves with the statement will press for simple housing for the clergy. "We cannot agree with the elaborate rectories that have been built in some of our parishes. These are a violation of Christian simplicity and an unfair burden on our people."

Contributions — One will donate at least twenty per cent of his income to charity, including one's own parish. As a special sign of this commitment, pledgers agree to contribute \$100 to the U.S. Bishops' 1970 Crusade Against Poverty, and if the Crusade observes its pre-established conditions, this donation will become annual.

Experiments — Bishops will be asked to allow one or more priests who volunteer for it, to live away from parish property in a rented apartment among the parishioners, and in absolute simplicity. This is dramatic form of witness — if a risky one — for Christ's poor. The local bishop is called upon to allow one or more priests to earn part or all of their income by "outside employment." This employment has to be with and among the poor, and does not include a well-paying job with social agencies.

The statement by the Association of Pittsburg Priests closes with the assurance that in no way is it to be interpreted as a judgment on the intentions of others. There is acknowledgement of a "priestly failure to make our witness to simplicity more evident." The document is not to be construed as a condemnation of those who do not agree with the statement's application of the Christian message at it applies to priests.

ON CHURCH MUSIC

To all Rev. Parish Priests and Assistants, Rectors of Churches and Chapels, Major Superiors of Religious Congregations, Heads of Catholic Schools and Colleges, Choirmasters and Music Conductors, and to the people of God in general:

Greetings in the Lord!

We write to you about a topic of serious importance in our liturgy, namely, the *liturgical music* in our churches.

The attached papers will give you the "*GUIDELINES FOR LITURGICAL MUSIC*", which was prepared by the National Liturgical Commission and approved by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines at its semi-annual Conference held in Cagayan de Oro City, July 6-8, 1971. It aims to purify and dignify our liturgical music played or sung in our churches and chapels during religious services, particularly the Holy Mass, the Nuptial Mass, and the Baptismal and Funeral Rites.

The Holy Mass, being the center of the Christian faith and unity, as repeatedly proclaimed by Vatican II, certainly deserves all the respect and reverence of our beloved faithful. Otherwise, with some of the present music pieces that are rendered during liturgical ceremonies, not only the solemnity, but also the very message of Christ, is being distorted and reduced to ridiculous proportions.

We wish to quote here, in this connection, the words of His Holiness Pope Paul VI addressed to a big group of Religious dedicated to liturgical music on April 15 of this year: "The Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy counsels musicians to compose melodies that will have a sacred character and tone; the texts, it says, must always comply with Catholic doctrine and should be taken, by preference, from Sacred Scripture and from liturgical sources. (S.C. 121). Therefore, the various compositions in use must be examined according to these norms and the music itself must not be of the changing fashions of the day that have neither spiritual nor artistic value."

And the Holy Father continues, "Let it be your task then to choose the appropriate music for the liturgy, practical, dignified, artistic and prayerful."

In view of the foregoing, and with the aim in view of ridding our churches and chapels of profane, illegitimate and irritatingly irreligious music, by these present letters, We hereby make the Catholic Bishops' Decree mandatory in the entire Archdiocese of Manila.

We vehemently enjoin, therefore, all our Rev. Parish and Assistant Priests, Rectors of Churches and Chapels, Major Religious Superiors of both men and women, Heads of Catholic Schools and Colleges, Music composers and conductors and our beloved faithful in general, to cooperate with us in this matter. We ask them to inform their respective wards regarding this matter and to ensure from them their wholehearted collaboration. The music pieces enumerated below are only a part of the kind of music that bear no significance whatsoever to the true meaning and mystery of the liturgical functions.

We are hurrying up the printing of a HYMNAL for liturgical use in all churches, chapels and other places where the Holy Mass and other church services may be held. This Hymnal will be of great use to the singing People of God, as well as to the accompanying organists.

We may also mention, in passing, that with guitar accompaniment alone, church hymns are not sung properly unless bolstered by harmonium or organ playing.

We repeat: all those concerned are very kindly urged to play or sing in churches and chapels only the kind of music that conforms with the prescribed Guidelines on the matter.

Praying and hoping for your generous cooperation in this regard, for the purity and efficacy of church liturgy, which certainly will rebound to the greater understanding and love of the Word of God, we remain.

Devotedly your in Christ,
(Sgd.) † RUFINO J. CARD. SANTOS
Archbishop of Manila

Manila, July 23, 1971

N.B.—*This Circular is to be copied in full in the Parish Book of Orders and Providences.*

GUIDELINES

1. Liturgical music should make prayer more meaningful.
2. The text must, as much as possible, harmonize with the liturgical action at the altar or sanctuary.
3. The music should foster "active participation of the faithful." Antiphonal singing is an effective means for promoting this participation. In this, simpler and shorter melodies assigned to the congregation may alternate or blend with the more intricate parts assigned to the choir.
4. The selection of hymns should exclude melodies that are adopted from the movies or love and profane songs. Hymns with lyrics that are more or less religious or liturgical but adapted to melodies taken from the movies or other profane sources should be discouraged or banned.
5. The hymns should be simple and singable, to be participated in by all, young and old.
6. The rhythm of the hymns should not be suggestive of swaying and dancing.
7. The amplification of guitars that accompany the hymns distract from prayer. An overly amplified guitar often does not have the proper quality for sacred music.
8. The use of combo drums and other percussion instruments should be discouraged or banned. Percussions and drums are folk musical instruments of the Africans and Indians but not of the Filipinos.

BANNED SONGS

(To be banned in Liturgical Services)

1. More "Mondo Cane"
2. Exodus "Exodus"
3. Impossible Dream "Man From La Mancha"
4. Tomorrow's Love "Uhaw" (Bomba picture)
5. Somewhere My Love "Dr. Zhivago"

6. A Time For Us "Theme from Romeo & Juliet"
7. Climb Every Mountain "The Sound of Music"
8. No Man is an Island "No Man is an Island"
9. If Ever I Would Leave You "Camelot"
10. If I Love You "Carousel"
11. I'll Never Find Another You "Love Song"
12. I Believe
13. You'll Never Walk Alone
14. The Cardinal Theme from "The Cardinal"
15. Silayan
16. Five Hundred Miles
17. Dahil Sa Iyo
18. Walk Hand in Hand
19. Born Free "Born Free"
20. Blowing in the Wind
21. He
22. More
23. I Know I'll Never Find Another You
24. I Know I'll Never Be Alone
25. Time to Change
26. Song From "Love Story"
27. Theme Songs of Contracting Couples
28. Broadway Musicals
29. Negro Spirituals