

Editorial



ARE OUR COURTS STUPID?

Recently, Mayor Lacson of Manila was accused of having labelled one of our judges. The impulsive and zealous Mayor, anxious to clean corruption from the city, allegedly had hurled some epithets such as "stupid," etc. at the judge with whose decision he disagreed.

Are our courts stupid? Frankly, our impression is otherwise. With much pleasure we have noted quite the opposite,—that many of our judges are blessed with the intellectual acumen and serenity of judgment that is an ornament to their profession.

But if we were to be asked another question, our answer might not be so favorable.

To the question, "Are our courts too slow?", our answer would be an emphatic affirmative. Only too often, civil and even criminal cases which should be decided within a few weeks or a couple of months, drag on for one or several years.

We remember well a certain criminal case in which justice was delayed for four years. Because of various legal technicalities, changes of jurisdiction, etc. incredible postponements occurred. . . Finally, the case came before a certain judge who, after careful but expeditious consideration, sentenced the criminal to a seven-year prison term. The judge later commented that never in all his years of court experience had he come across a case in which the evidence was so crystal-clear for conviction. There was not a scintilla of doubt, he said, about the guilt of the man. And still that case had dragged on for four long years.

If this were an isolated case, we could forget about it. But unfortunately, delays are rather the rule than the exception.

What is the cause?

Are our judges too few, too heavily burdened with too many cases? If so, let us insist that Congress establish additional judges.

Or are our judges underpaid? In Manila and perhaps in other important cities, we find members of the judiciary, even of the higher courts, engaged in teaching to increase their legitimate personal income. Instead of using all of their available energies in clearing up the crowded court calendars, they apparently are forced to take one or perhaps several daily hours of teaching in order to support their families. Apparently then, we should increase the salaries of our judges, in order that they be not forced to spend their strength, so badly needed in the business of the courts, for lucrative sidelines.

No, we don't agree with the alleged charge that our courts are cursed with stupidity.

But we do feel that our courts are slow, lamentably slow. Far slower for instance than those in the United States, and especially in England.

Justice delayed is justice denied! Something must be done about it.

SPEED-LIKE A TORTOISE!

Another instance of tortoise-like slowness we find in some of the boards of professional examiners. Recently, we noticed a news story in which a certain board announced that five of the candidates under their supervision had successfully passed the professional examination. Looking further, we noticed that the examination was given in July. The results were announced in November. How terribly overworked these examiners must be if it takes them four months to do their job!

We know that in some instances, such as the bar examinations where the number of candidates amounts to several thousands, many months of careful work are required before the results can be announced. But in other occasions, where the examinees are few, a little more speed could reasonably be expected.

SPEED-LIKE AN EAGLE!

Over on the other side of the Pacific Ocean, we noticed an agreeable example of speed after the recent presidential election. The polls closed at 9:00 p.m. More than 60 million people voted over a vast expanse of territory. Still, three hours later, by midnight, the results were known and the decision announced.

Reminds us of our own election polls! So different! To say nothing of the "speedy" decision on our electoral protests. That only takes two or three or four years!

And even more consoling in the American elections was the sportsmanship of the losers.

The campaign had been bitterly fought. Charges and countercharges were hurled and parried for months over the length and breadth of the whole country. Nevertheless, as soon as the results were known and the decision announced, the leading candidate of the losing side, Gov. Adlai Stevenson, cabled his congratulations to his victorious rival with a generous message of true democratic sportsmanship.

A VICTORIOUS LOSER

Many of us who, six months ago, had never heard of Gov. Adlai Stevenson have, as a result of his campaign, grown to consider him as a truly great American.

His acute thinking, his profound grasp of governmental problems, his felicitous literary expressions, his wit and quiet charm make him stand out head and shoulders above most of the contemporary political figures of the world. A pleasant and refreshing exception to the cheap demagogues and name-callers so often found in modern political life.

On election night when radio and telegraph announced his decisive defeat by Eisenhower, Gov. Stevenson was asked how he felt. His answer was typical.

He said that he felt like the little boy who stubbed his toe in the dark. He was too old to cry,—and it hurt too much to laugh.

The apt anecdote, borrowed from the great Lincoln, was worth a thousand words.

DOES UNCLE SAM CAUSE OUR P. I. CRIME WAVE?

Not all impressions of the United States, however, are so favorable to all people.

In a recent public address, one of our most prominent ladies in public life, Mrs. Pilar Hidalgo Lim, presented a novel reason to explain the present criminality in the Philippines. To blame, she said, was the United States, because of its contributions of money and other gifts to the Philippines. She said these have weakened the moral fiber of the Filipino people.

Fortunately, this is one problem that can be salvaged quite easily. If our government authorities or even some of our leading citizens would just

send a brief note to the American Congress, we are sure that it will be easy to persuade them to stop all gifts and loans to the Philippines. Thus, presto! according to this theory, our crime wave should cease.

U. S. CRIME WAVE

Speaking more seriously, the crime situation in the United States itself is very serious, especially the juvenile crime situation.

Recently, J. Edgar Hoover, the director of the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) reported that during the first six months of 1952, more persons aged 18 years were arrested in the United States than of any other age group. He reported that during the same six months period, over one million major crimes were committed.

Persons less than 21 years of age presented more than 30% of the 95,600 arrested for crimes against property. Persons under 25 years of age represented one half of all persons arrested for such crimes. Another discouraging fact is that crime among women is increasing twice as fast as crime among men.

We do not have available at the moment parallel figures about criminality in the Philippines. But it is undeniable that our Filipino youth also, both male and female, are only too frequently finding their way to the criminal courts. Juvenile delinquency is rampant.

Once again we repeat what we have frequently noted in the past, that religious education in the schools, apart from achieving its primary purpose of bringing the children closer to God, is also a most powerful antidote to the lawless inclinations that may take root in any youthful character. Most earnestly, we urge all prominent citizens in and out of the government to unite that this Christian country may soon have public schools that are truly Christian and God-fearing.

YOUNG CHRISTIAN WORKERS ARE "BLESSED"

Without forgetting the primary importance of the home in youth training, we also recommend the encouragement of the fine youth organizations already started in the country such as the Catholic Boy Scouts, Catholic Youth Organization and the Young Christian Workers. Of this last named, which is possibly the least known in the Philippines, we have noted with joy the growth in many parts of the world.

Recently in Central America, the Costa Rican Hierarchy characterized the Young Christian Workers' movement as "the living Gospel of modern

times", in a joint pastoral commemorating the tenth anniversary of the movement's establishment in that country.

"Blessed is the hour in which the Young Christian Workers' movement took root in Costa Rica," the Bishops said. "It has been an advancing movement for the triumph of goodness."

The Young Christian Workers number about 8,000 in Costa Rica, which has a population of slightly less than a million. They have established a Youth Home in the capital city, equipped with training shops for young men and women, recreation halls and sleeping headquarters. They also publish a labor weekly, "El Luchador", and a Catholic almanac.

The Young Christian Workers, together with our other fine Catholic organizations for youth, deserve the wholehearted support of all citizens who are interested in our young people.

PROTESTANT LIES ABOUT THE BIBLE

For centuries, the lie has been preached that the Catholic Church frowns Church on the publication of the Bible. It has even said that our Catholic people are forbidden to read the Bible. To prove their charge, our enemies say that in some Catholic churches and institutions the Bible was chained to a desk so that the common people could not have access to it.

Even in the Philippines, we find that this lie is still being spread. But we think that many of the Protestant liemongers are really only clouded with ignorance and are not malicious.

The fact is that it was the Catholic Church that preserved the Bible and brought it down to posterity through the early Christian Era and the Middle Ages, centuries before Protestantism was born.

As to the statement that in some monasteries the Bible was chained to a desk, probably that is true. But there was a very good reason for the use of a chain. It must be remembered that in those days, before the advent of the printing press, all Bibles and other literature, either profane or sacred, were written by long-hand. To produce a single book was a long, laborious process, consuming months of toil. Consequently every book was precious and had to be guarded or even chained so that it would not be lost.

Along came the printing press and the time of Guttenberg. And we know from historical facts that in the Germany of Guttenberg, it was not Luther or any other Protestant who first published the Bible in German. Actually, the Catholic Bible appeared in German long before Luther's, one

having been published in 1478 and the other in 1483, the year Luther was born.

As to our present-day Philippines, we are happy once again to encourage our readers to purchase and use the splendid new editions of the New Testament in the local vernaculars. The Cebuano edition by His Excellency, Mons. Manuel Yap, Bishop of Bacolod, is a model of scholarship. For the Tagalog readers, the edition by the late lamented Father Trinidad, S. J., and his associates includes a personal recommendation of His Holiness, Pope Pius XII.

Thus our people will be fulfilling the wishes of another Pope, Benedict XV, who in his Encyclical Spiritus Paraclitus wrote "Our one desire for all the Church's children is that, being saturated with the Bible, they may arrive at the all-surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ."

HELP THE SICK AND THE HUNGRY

Not long ago an old lady came to our office with a little boy of six. The good woman, with quavering voice, told us that the little fellow was a complete orphan. With neither father nor mother nor other relatives to care for him, he had no place to live. Would we, she asked, take care of the boy and allow him to stay with us?

It seemed brutal to refuse this request. But we were forced to do so. We already were helping some destitute people to the very limit of our ability. In addition we lacked not only material means but we knew of no place to send the boy where he could receive the education and the affection which small children so desperately need.

But care of the destitute young is only one of the fields of charity in which we are lacking. Admittedly, there is much magnificent work now being done by many people in many places. But there is still much room for improvement.

Following are some specific suggestions, (which are mentioned with no intention of excluding other organizations unknown to us and possibly of equal or greater worth):

- a. Greater attention to the organization of Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul in the parishes.
- b. Additional clinics for the sick poor.
- c. Orphanages for destitute children, especially for boys in large centers of population.

- d. *Adult Education classes in the parishes to help the illiterate and to draw them closer to the Church. (The Government is ready to assist such classes, at least, in some small degree).*
- e. *Free Schools for the poor, similar to the schools now conducted by some parishes, some religious orders and congregations and the YLAC.*
- f. *Youth Clubs, similar to those now being conducted by the Catholic Boy Scouts, the Young Christian Workers, the Catholic Youth organization, etc.*
- g. *Additional free hospital beds, similar to those in Manila in the U.S.T. Hospital, San Juan de Dios Hospital, etc.*
- h. *Cooperation with the Columbian Farmers' Aid Association, founded in 1951 by Manila Knights of Columbus to assist our rural population.*

In addition, some form of regional Catholic charity associations could be very helpful to stimulate activities, aid coordination and prevent overlapping.

We feel that such intensification of the works of mercy would be an undoubted boon to the Catholic life of the country. From a study of local conditions, we find that history is repeating itself. Just as the Communists in the Philippines are now slandering the Catholic Church, so a century ago the atheists of France hurled taunts at young Frederic Ozanam, with "Show us your works!"

The inspired young men responded by organizing the magnificent St. Vincent de Paul Conferences for laymen, which have now spread throughout the world. Their plan is "to join action to words and to affirm by works the vitality of their faith." And in doing so they are only following the blessed example given to us by our Divine Lord while here on earth, only heeding the magnificent exhortation of the Apostle of the Gentiles who told us "If I speak with the tongue of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals." (Corinthians.)

Today in the Philippines, the Communists are pretending to be friends of the poor, and unfortunately are achieving at least partial success in winning converts by their specious promises. To combat them, we must, most of all increase the spiritual life of the people with greater mortifications and prayers. Admittedly, we must strive to instruct them with carefully planned sermons and instructions. It is vital that we endeavor to put into practice the principles of Social Justice expounded in the 1950 Pastoral Letter of our Hierarchy.

But in addition we feel that greater attention should also be given to the corporal works of mercy. And this, not merely because our enemies taunt us with "show us your works," but primarily because our Divine Lord and Master has taught us by word and example that these words are a most beautiful and most important element in the life of any true Christian.

Let us tell Him, this Christmas, that we will try to do more in the future.



THE LOWLIEST ANIMAL

It is a significant thing, proving how precious is humility in the eyes of God, that the ass or donkey, lowliest of beasts, plays such a prominent role in the story of Christ.

The **Golden Legend** says that on the journey to Nazareth from Bethlehem Joseph "brought with him an ass and an ox." Mary rode on the donkey, and the ox Joseph meant to sell for the support of the holy Family.

In the typical representation of the crib, both animals appear standing placidly in the background near the manger upon which lay the holy Child.

The ass is the animal of the flight into Egypt and the return to Nazareth, and great artists have beautifully commemorated both scenes.

At the end of Christ's life, it was the humble beast that our Saviour chose for His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and according to folk-lore, it is in memory of this last event that the donkey bears a cross upon his back.

All this made such an impression upon the faithful in the Middle Ages that they went so far as to institute a popular "Feast of the Donkey," with appropriate songs and a pageant.



NO HARD FEELINGS

A fellow was telling us about a friend of his in college, who, like all the others, had to take his mid-year exams shortly after Christmas. One of his questions was: "What causes a depression?"

Spurred on by some impish impulse or other, he answered: "God knows! I don't! Merry Christmas."

But the professor was equal to the situation, for when the paper was returned, he found the following notation from the learned man:

"God gets 100, you get zero. Happy New Year!"