

- This Spanish movement is here described as the organ of the anti-liberal Catholics against progressive ideas and healthy social changes.

"CURSILLO" AND ITS TRUE NATURE

There was a very fetching sports-page picture the other day that showed the highest-ranking Knights of Columbus and Masons in the country playing golf together. Occasion was the first K of C-Freemasons golf tournament ever. This took place, not coincidentally, after the Vatican had announced that it was no longer a sin for Catholics to apply for admission to Masonry lodges. In the past, any Catholic who became a Mason was automatically excommunicated from the Church. This meant, from the Catholic viewpoint, that he was thereby doomed to eternal hell and damnation. Now it is no longer so. Now Catholics may become Masons and still save their souls.

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This is only one, to be sure, of radical and fundamental changes that have overtaken Catholic dogma since Pope

John XXIII, that incomparable innovator, "opened windows" and invited the winds of modernization and ecumenism to sweep fresh air into the ancient institution. Not all Catholics have accepted the changes gracefully and uncomplainingly. Some have been affected so traumatically with their faith shaken to its roots as a result of the reversal of "truths" they had always considered deathless and immutable, that they have left the Church in anger and disgust. Others have taken it upon themselves to try to rein back and curb the pace and extent of change, to fight a holding, rear-guard action against the innovators and iconoclasts.

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The "cursillo" movement is in the latter category. It is a systematic campaign by the conservative segment of the Church to nail down the faithful to the traditional or-

thodoxies and doctrinal rigidities. It emphasizes, to this end, such aspects of the faith as sexual morality and fear of eternal damnation. It is not a meaningless coincidence that the "cursillo" originated in Spain. That country has always been a stronghold of conservative Catholicism — although, naturally, its repressiveness has produced its own counter-reaction, as spearheaded by a militant young clergy that has involved itself in labor unionism and in efforts to expand the scope of academic freedom in the country's schools and universities. Nor is it surprising that the movement has taken such firm hold and become so spectacularly popular in the Philippines. Philippine Catholicism is just as reactionary and bigoted as its Spanish counterpart.

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In Europe, on the other hand, the Dutch Catholics (5.2 million Dutchmen out of a total population of 12.5 million) are working their religion over with a zest and — if this word may be properly used — irreverence that threatens to rattle the rest of

the Catholic world. A Dutch catechism — "A New Catechism: Catholic Faith For Adults" — is selling strongly in the United States although or perhaps because, as one American magazine speculated, it has been banned by the American bishops from American Catholic schools. It has no imprimatur, meaning the Church's official authorization. The catechism teaches — and where it does not teach outright it proposes — unorthodox and far-out interpretations of such long-established doctrines as the virgin birth, sin, papal infallibility, heaven and hell, original sin, etc.

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An American magazine's recent survey of the Netherlands' avant-garde Catholicism gave some indication of the extent and depth of its "heresy." The survey consisted of interviews with priests and other religious, lay theologians and professors, and ex-priests. On the question of birth control, for example, three priests and one lay authority were unanimous in agreeing that the Church could no longer legitimately

prohibit it. "Birth control is an absolute necessity," the layman said. The priests' comments were: "The Church has nothing to decree here, although people can be served by criteria, information discussion. The best pill is the right pill." Another: "Approval of birth control is the Church's duty toward individuals as well as toward a sane population policy." And the third: "The issue is no longer within the competence of the Church."

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On the Church's obsession with sexual morality (which is the mainstay of the "cursillo" program), all four Dutch priests who spoke out on the subject spoke scornfully. The Rev. A. J. Duindam, an Amsterdam pastor, said: "This overemphasis is a tragic folly. The Church has hardly reflected on social ethics, and even there, it is still in its infancy." The Rev. Prior Robert Adolfs, author of a book on Catholicism that barely escaped suppression by the Vatican, said: "A real fixation in which the role of the celibate obsessions has been very important. The

priestly bed experts!" The Rev. Leo Alting von Geusau, general director of IDO-C in Rome: "It is impossible to denounce this too much! Here are the products of the frustrated thinking of celibates." And the Rev. Edward Schillebeeckx, a renowned Dominican theologian: "Only since Pius XI, that is in the recent past, has the Church been so specially reactionary in this respect. But do not forget that the entire culture was dominated by this sexual anxiety."

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All of this undoubtedly is strong medicine for Filipino Catholics. Inevitably and ultimately, however, these winds of "heresy" and challenge sweeping out of Holland will ruffle and agitate the Church in this country. Perhaps it is in anticipation of, and preparation for, such a siege that the "cursillo" is being feverishly propagated. Will the defenses hold? Will the "invasion" be repelled? These are the questions that will determine the future of the Church in this country. — J. V. Cruz, *Manila Times*, March 17, 1968.