

# God and Your Child

By Mary Cecilia McGrath, Ph.D.

Ash Wednesday began the great season of penance. It effects the church throughout the world. The day is named from the distribution of ashes. "Remember man that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return," is the Church's warning.

The Church is our Mother even as she is the Spouse of Christ. In baptism she brought us forth as children of grace destined to inherit with Jesus Christ, God's own Son, the wonderful life of God in heaven. We are on earth for only a few years. We are placed here to work out our salvation. Our Mother, the Church, does not wish us to forget, or neglect, or fail to appreciate why we are here. So she reminds us of our purpose very forcibly on Ash Wednesday, holding before our eyes the fact of death and the fate of our body.

However, she does not intend that we be gloomy about death. Death is no tragedy. It is, instead, our birth into heaven, our entrance into the great inheritance which the Saviour bought for us by His passion and death. The saints have had the right outlook on death. They loved to think about it; they longed for it to come and free them of this life that they might enter into God's life. After all, it was for the life of God in heaven that we were made. Our destiny is so wonderful that the Son of God left heaven, lived on earth 33 years, suf-

fered most cruelly and died a most ignominious death on the Cross, to win it for you and me. No wonder the Church doesn't want us to make a mistake and miss it.

Theologians tell us that the greatest pain of hell is not the torture of fire suffered there. Nor is it being with everybody you despise and hate forever. No, the greatest pain of hell is that souls there have lost God. They have lost the life for which they were made—the life of God. They have lost the treasure that Jesus Christ came Himself to win and safeguard for them—the possession of God. And they have lost it of their own free will and forever.

No, death is not something to be feared. If we are in the state of grace, death is a friend. It is sin that is our enemy. It is sin that makes death a gateway to darkness. Our Lady, appearing at Fatima, warned against this terrible enemy of ours, sin, which is destroying Christ's work in the souls of so many. And as Our Lady, weeping in her sorrow, told the three children to whom she appeared, death is finding thousands of these souls in sin and they are being plunged into hell. What a dreadful price for men to pay for a little gratification of the body! We need the Church to remind us: *Remember man that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return.*

—Mary Cecilia McGrath, Ph.D.

## Confiscation of Church Property by Yugoslavia Condemned by Vatican

Berne. —(C)—The following well-authenticated reports of incidents in Yugoslavia received here add further details to the picture of the relentless and unyielding harassment of the Church under the rule of Marshal Tito!

In Zagreb the Government has confiscated the Bishop Lang home for unemployed working girls. The house, with all its furnishings and funds, was taken over and the Sisters in charge turned out into the street. So many charitable and educational institutions have been confiscated in Yugoslavia that it is impossible to accommodate the Sisters in the few Motherhouses which remain. Many Sisters must return to the homes of their parents.

In the village of Sovski Dol, a young university graduate named Josephine Nevistic, who had been teaching catechism to the village children, was attacked and beaten to death by two unknown men. A well-known communist by the name of Smojver had been seen in the village for several days before the murder. The local police investigated all the houses in Sovski Dol, but did not apprehend the murderers; instead, they told the villagers not to talk about what had happened. Nothing has appeared in the Yugoslav press about the crime.

A Dominican priest of the Zagreb archdiocese was arrested recently on the charge of participating in a political demonstration and fined the heavy sum of 2,000 dinars. The "demonstration" was a procession in which the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary was carried.

The public prosecutor in the district of Zubanja, gathering all the priests of his district to instruct them on what subjects they might discuss in their sermons, told them that, among other things, they were forbidden to preach about Job. The Prosecutor said that the people might apply to their present conditions the lesson of Job, who according to the Old Testament recovered his lost property and happiness through a policy of patience and resignation.

The last publishing house under Catholic auspices in Yugoslavia the Sacred Heart Printing Press of Zagreb, was confiscated last month, under a "law" which provides that the property of a criminal may be confiscated by the Government. The director of the Sacred Heart establishment was sentenced to two years in prison.

At election time the police have been particularly active in their surveillance of priests. People who spoke to priests on the streets were later questioned by the police as to what the priest said, what was his attitude on the elections, etc. Priests in country districts were subjected to great pressure in order to force them to vote.

Among the acts of vandalism against sacred objects reported recently was the demolition of the widely-venerated statue of the Blessed Virgin at Travnik in Bosnia, the destruction of the statue of the Madonna at Zagreb, outrages committed at the Shrine of Our Lady of Bistrica, and the defacing of pictures of the Blessed Virgin in a number of confiscated religious houses.

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## Catholic Church Gains Chinese Approval Because of Good Works

By Rev. Patrick O'Connor, S. S. C. (Special Correspondent)

Shanghai.—(NC) — Never before has the Catholic Church been so highly regarded by the people of China as it is today. Popular prejudice against Christianity is at an all-time low here.

Ever since my arrival in China three months ago, I have been meeting evidence of this truth. I have found it in Shanghai, Nanking and Peiping; in Kalgan, gateway to the north-west, and in Manchuria. It has been confirmed in conversation with persons from widely separated parts of the country.

Independently and uniformly, Chinese and foreign Bishops and priests, Brothers and Sisters have testified to it. I have heard tributes to the Church from such diverse non-Christians as the foreign-educated Mayor Ho of Peiping, the communist Li Lisan and the Nationalist General Fu Tso-yi, governor of Spiyuan and Chahar. The communist spokesman, one of the top Reds in Manchuria, freely acknowledged the works of mercy done by Catholic missionaries during the war and the personal risks and sacrifices they endured.

In Peiping recently I attended the premiere of the first major motion picture produced in China since the war. Entitled "The Sacred City," it is probably the most ambitious movie ever filmed by a Chinese company. The hero is an American Catholic priest and the plot is woven around his fearless activities in shielding and sheltering his Chinese flock during the war. His church is the "Sacred City" of refuge and prayer. The scenes were shot in and around real churches in the Peiping area. It is clear that the Chinese director and entire company tried to be reverent and sympathetic in handling their Catholic theme. At the premiere of this highly significant film the theatre was crowded with prominent Chinese. Since then the movie has been shown to capacity houses in Peiping, Nanking, Tientsin and other cities. The Chinese press has given it enthusiastic reviews.

Probably the principal reason for the comparative popularity of the Church at present is the universally recognized charitable service rendered by the missionaries during the war. All China knows how priests, Brothers and Sisters stayed with their people, threw open their buildings to refugees and risked their lives to help the afflicted. The elevation of His Eminence Thomas Cardinal Tien, Chinese hierarchy and the completion of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the Holy See have added to the friendly feeling. The personal prestige of Cardinal Tien, Archbishop Paul Yu-pin, and Dr. John C. Wu is another factor. During the war and immediately

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Responding to the radio appeal of the Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, on Ash Wednesday, nearly 2,000,000 children in Catholic schools throughout the United States began the Lenten "Save Starving Children" drive of the Bishops' Relief Campaign for Victims of war. At Our Lady of Lourdes School, Bethesda, Md., typical of scenes throughout the country, the children and their teacher open the drive with a mite box. (NC Photos)

after its close, when U. S. soldiers were numerous in China, the sight of the stalwart American Catholics in uniform going to Mass made a favorable impression.

The Chinese communist persecution of the Church is not a popular movement nor is it general. It is usually engineered by out-of-town red agents, who frequently have to resort to intimidation to overcome local reluctance and even opposition. Nowhere have the attacks on the Church been a spontaneous development and nowhere have they happened unless the red army was in control. Nor is the persecution practised uniformly. In some places they permit the Church to function fairly normally.

All the missions of the following communities having American priest members are completely outside the communist-held zones: Dominicans, Franciscans of Cincinnati, Franciscans of New York,

California Jesuits, Maryknollers in South China, Passionists, Scarborough Foreign Missions, St. Columban's Society and Vincentians, Eastern and Western Provinces. Part of the territories staffed by the Divine Word Fathers, the Canadian Jesuits, Franciscans of California and Franciscans of Chicago and most of the Maryknoll territory in Manchuria are in non-communist control.

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