

Theologian Sounds Warning Against Worshipping Church

CHICAGO — (NC) — "Catholics can easily fall into a subtle form of idolatry" by worshipping the Church, the keynote speaker warned at the Chicago Liturgical Week here.

It is idolatry "to worship anyone — or anything — save God alone," Father Frank Norris, S.S., professor of systematic theology at St. Patrick's Seminary, Menlo Park, Calif., told a capacity audience of 5,000.

Sponsored by the National Liturgical Conference, the Chicago Liturgical Week is the third to be held this summer. Previous weeks were held in Baltimore in June and in Portland, Ore., in August.

"We do not worship the Church. We do not worship her customs, her laws, her doctrinal formulas or creeds. We do not worship her liturgy, her sacraments — no, not even the Mass itself. To do so would be idolatry. Whatever may and must be said about our attitude toward these sacred realities, we cannot give to them the homage due to God alone," he said.

The nature of the Church, Father Norris said, "is always a mixture of 'already' and 'not yet.'" It is already holy, he explained, but not yet fully holy. It already correctly grasps and proclaims Christ's teaching, but it does not yet grasp or proclaim it perfectly. Its worship is already acceptable "in spirit and truth," but not yet perfect.

Because of this, he said, "it is not only possible but mandatory for us to speak of the reform of the Church. . . . To be unwilling to face up to a need for purification and reform where it exists is to do a grave disservice to the Church."

THE CHURCH TODAY, he said, "sees more clearly perhaps than ever before that God's saving plan is broader and more extensive than her own visible boundaries. The plan of salvation is all-embracing and is not restricted by the necessary human limitations of the visible structure of the Church."

Urban parish life "is often isolationist, divisive, and self-serving," another speaker charged, saying that such parishes are "already dead."

Father John Harmon, associate director of Packard Manse, Roxbury, Mass., said a parish's vitality is determined by "the degree to which the parish corresponds to the unalterable shape of the life God has given us."

"Underneath all our disloyalties, our dividedness, and our violence is this one people that God has made, however we describe it theologically," Father Harmon said, and "when parochial life is lived in obedience to Him it is necessarily a life in common, in communion, a network of mutuality with all men and all life."

He added: "It is remarkable that in so many ways our parishes exist as though we can avoid this common life with our brother . . . and still be loyal to God and fulfill our free humanity."

The "persistent malady of the Christian," he said, is a "schizophrenic mentality" that separates life into worldly and unworldly fields of endeavor. "To break this unnatural Church-world dichotomy," he said the parish must always be seen "as inevitably in and of the world, and the world . . . as inevitably in and of the parish."

For a time, he said, it would be good to "speak of the parish as secular and worldly, and speak of the world as religious and spiritual."

The parish ought not, he said, aim at "eventually bridging the gap" between Church and world, but should recognize "the non-ex-

istence of the gap in the essential structure of reality."

The "deadliness" of the parish is not only due to the false separation of Church and world, he continued, but also to the failure to admit what he called "sickness": "we don't understand the graceful necessity of openly confessing our sicknesses . . . if we are to grow."

CHRISTIANS typically tend to suppose, he said, "that we have something good to give others 'outside,' while what they have to give us is negligible."

The give-and-take which the parish ought to develop in its community should not be "a parish program," he said, but rather one "in which some of the people of the parish are working with others who are not of the parish around a common need in the community . . . without any prior determination of who is to give and who is to receive, so that whatever good emerges is shared."

He called the separation of churches "the most incongruous and shocking (separation) of all." It is "perhaps understandable" that we separate ourselves from the pains and sickness of the world, "but how — sharing baptism, Bible, much belief and common tradition — do we explain our life, apart from the brother in Christ?"

The answer, he said, is that "we still actually think we can carry on a valid Church life in our present separated structures." But the freedom to "postpone to some ecumenically sublime future" the present need for union is not ours, he said, and "either we develop a life together — which we are absolutely free to do since the basic unity has already been created — or we continue to live out a form of death."

At the closing session, Thomas Klise, a writer and editor, said: "Catholics show no more sense of mission than anyone else." He called religious education "the villain of the piece" that prevents "applying the Gospel message of justice and mercy to the problems of the contemporary social order."

"After so many years of 'What does it profit a man?' and 'Seek first the kingdom of God,' the impression is gained that the whole idea of being in this vale of tears is to get out of it safely."

"The result," he added, "is not an Incarnational Christian but a Manichee, who thinks of this world as his natural enemy, who is distrustful of secular man and his achievements, who tends to cultivate in the name of piety a resolute detachment from the very things that ought to be his natural and most important concerns."

"And this vice of other-worldliness is so entrenched that even when witness becomes an evident moral imperative, instinct will betray it and habit confound it, and the frazzled prophet — what will he do? He will found a study club."

"Secularity is no handicap" to the mission of the Christian but is rather "its pride and glory, its distinctive and characteristic note," he said. Because this secularity "is the special, not to say exclusive, possession of the layman," those clergy who abandon their "higher role" risk "compromising the judgment of their higher office."

THE CONSTITUTION on the Church, he said, freed the layman from imitating the priesthood. "In telling us that the fundamental task of the layman consists in temporal engagement," the Church is urging laymen to present "an incorruptible truthfulness to the world."

PLEDGE TO AID SOCIAL JUSTICE

Hong Kong — (NC) — A pact to support and promote socio-economic justice among the peoples and governments of Asia was entered into here by 150 priests from 15 Asian nations. This came at the conclusion of the month-long Priests' Institute for Social Action in Asia.

The (Aug. 29) resolution — to be carried out through teaching in schools and parishes, organizations among youth, labor, farmers, teachers and managers, and overall influence in local communities — cited the need of many millions in Asia "of more and better food, houses, education and medical care . . ." and pledged among other points:

- To foster cooperation toward a truly human socio-economic order in which freedom, social justice, full employment and effective government will flourish.
- To promote socially adapted industrialization.
- To strengthen agriculture.
- To help organize efforts of farmers, workers, managers and citizens.
- To promote systems of self-help, such as credit unions, co-operatives, trade unions and professional groups.

One Hundred Enrolled In School of Nursing

One hundred students have been enrolled for the 1965-66 academic year at the Mercy School of Nursing in Charlotte, N.C.

Applications for the freshman class numbered 75, but only 48 were able to be enrolled. Three students were accepted as transfer upperclassmen.

At the general assembly marking the beginning of the new term Miss Paula Moore, of Durham, N.C., was presented the award given annually to the freshman with the highest average by the Mecklenburg County Medical Auxiliary.



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