

The Case of Cardinal McIntyre

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Summary: Elaborates on the Catholic Worker relationship with Church authorities over many years and the “conflict of freedom and authority.” Reaffirms the laity’s freedom of conscience and leadership role in action against injustice. Reproaches “our shepherds” who fail to preach voluntary poverty and “preach the gospel in season, out of season, and that gospel is ‘all men are brothers.’” (DDLW #196).

Of all hostilities one of the saddest is the war between clergy and laity. We have written and spoken many times of all the aspects of war, the beginnings in our own hearts, the hostilities in the family between husband and wife, parents and children, children and parents. The entire conflict of authority and freedom. **The Catholic Worker**, pacifist and anarchist in philosophy, has had to discuss and write about all these things, in particular, and in general.

The works of mercy are works of love. The works of war are works of the devil,—“You do not know of what spirit you are,” Jesus said to his disciples when they would call down fire from heaven on the inhospitable Samaritans. This is to look at things in the large context of modern war. But as for the hostilities in our midst, the note of violence and conflict in all our dealings with others,—everyone seems to contribute to it. There is no room for righteous wrath today. In the entire struggle over civil rights, the war which is going on in which one side is nonviolent, suffering martyrdoms, every movement of wrath in the heart over petty hostilities must be struggled with in order to hold up the strength of the participants.

“Let us but raise the level of religion in our hearts, and it will rise in the world,” Newman wrote. “He who attempts to set up God’s kingdom in his heart, furthers it in the world.” We cannot all go on Freedom Rides, or take part in the COFO program in Mississippi, as young students are doing. (Marie Asche, who worked with us last summer, has gone to Mississippi.) But we can sustain them in our contributions, money, prayers, and by works in our local area along these lines.

Seminarians

This is what seminarians and the Catholic Interracial group have been doing in Los Angeles, not only this year but for many years, only to meet with prohibitions

of meetings, to setting up interracial councils, and so on. This silence and non-cooperation on the part of the priest and bishop and cardinal, this more than silence,—this censure, this prohibition, has increased the separation of clergy and laity, and has built up a wall of bitterness.

Last month a young priest in the Los Angeles diocese wrote a letter to the Holy Father, asking for the removal of Cardinal McIntyre from the work of the diocese. His letter was given to the press all over the country and was reprinted by both secular and Catholic press.

Caine Mutiny

When I read the accounts in the dailies and some of the diocesan press, I thought of **The Caine Mutiny**. When I read the book, I compared it with the stories of the sea in Joseph Conrad's novels. The reasonable interference of the sturdy mate in the more recent book brought him to trial on the charge of mutiny. One of the things that struck me most forcibly in the latter book was the difference between the worker mate and the intellectual officer who needled him into making complaints and then would not back him up, who urged him to save the ship and the crew by disobeying orders, and then would not testify for him at the trial.

When a friend was criticizing one of the Cardinals as being backward and restrictive of the freedom of the laity at that time, I was reminded of the book I had just read and I asked him why he did not go to the Chancery office and state his complaints, his remonstrances. The laity have a freedom to express themselves that the clergy do not. The late beloved Fr. LaFarge, S.J. said in one of his last books, that the trouble with the church in America was a bullying clergy and a subservient laity and when I quoted that statement in regard to an incident which happened at the CW house of hospitality in Chicago, one of our readers wrote in angrily holding us to be the author of the statement of Fr. LaFarge.

Cardinals

I had not intended to write at length about this Los Angeles incident since so many of the diocesan papers and weeklies gave it ample coverage. But I recalled letters I had received in the last year, asking my advice as to what to do, letters from the laity and from the seminarians, east and west,—and when I recalled too my long acquaintance with Cardinal McIntyre, (shall I say friendship?) I decided I would write at length, and personally. What I say about him, I could say also in one way or another about Cardinal Spellman and Cardinal Cushing.

Another reason why it is good to write at length is that the problem has to do with war, with race, with poverty, voluntary and involuntary, with spiritual

teaching, and our dissatisfaction with it. And what we can do about all these things.

One of the newspapers in New York talked about the indignity which the young priest was forced to submit to, the kneeling before his superior and promising obedience. I do not know what the ceremony was, but I imagine it is that one that occurs at every ordination, when the candidate for the priesthood kneels and placing his two hands within the hands of the bishop, swears obedience. One never hears a Catholic objecting to this. We lay people kneel to receive absolution, to receive a blessing, to receive all the sacraments, as coming from God, through the priest. The non-Catholic does not realize what a relationship of love and loyalty there is between the layman and the priest, the priest and bishop. In all the great events of one's life, birth, marriage and death, and for the unmarried the confirming of their vocation. For the times of sin and sickness, there is absolution and anointing, and at the moment of death, the holy oils and the prayers of priest and the people. It is our Faith which lends strength and dignity to our paltry and tragic lives. "In Thy hand are strength and power and to Thy hand it belongs to make everything great and strong."

An Early Friend

I first met Cardinal McIntyre back in the late twenties when I was filled with the longing to be a Catholic and could not because of marriage difficulties. One goes to a priest in the chancery office to straighten out these difficulties and Cardinal McIntyre who was then a monsignor was the one assigned to me to take care of my inquiries. His office was not a private one. His was one of a long row of desks on either side of the room, far enough apart so that one could talk privately. There was always a long line of people waiting in the outer office, and one by one, we were ushered in. There was never any haste about these interviews. He always gave me most courteous and sympathetic attention and I remember times when I was there at noon and he had a sandwich and a glass of milk brought to his desk. He said the Angelus when the clock struck twelve. I remember thinking how hard these young priests had to work, the tales they had to listen to. They had to be lawyers, psychologists, priests, all in one. Between him and Father Hyland, another young priest at Tottenville, Staten Island, I was helped along the way, over a period of several years, and was baptized.

Priests and The Worker

When five years later I started **The Catholic Worker** at the instigation of Peter Maurin, I did not ask permission,—I did not discuss it with the chancery office. My contact with these young priests made me realize the more what I had always felt,—that Catholics lived in a world of their own, quite apart from the rest of the population. They did represent the Irish, the Italians, the Poles, the Hungarians and all the rest of the immigrant Catholic crowd who seemed so

apart in every way, not just by religion, from the rest of the white, Protestant and generally middle class people from whom I sprang. I felt the order, the discipline of their lives, even if it meant a twenty minute Mass on a week day. In complete silence, and a three quarters of an hour of worship on Sunday with news of bingo parties and coal collections scattered in with announcements of requiem Masses and banns of marriage.

No Permission Asked

I had been writing articles for the **Sign**, for **America**, the Jesuit paper, and doing clerical work for Fr. Joseph McSorley the Paulist and when I spoke to them of my venture, all three editors, Father Harold Purcell, Fr. Parsons, and Fr. McSorley all advised me to launch out, but not to ask permission. But I understood why. How make the hierarchy responsible for such an unproved venture? They might be held responsible for debts to be contracted—perhaps that was also understood to be part of the question.

At any rate the first issues of the paper came out and were greeted with enthusiasm by clergy and laity alike. The circulation soared, enough contributions came in so that hospitality could be provided for the down and outs that made up our first staff.

Workers and scholars alike were down and out in the depression, and we have always been the lame, the halt and the blind, the off scouring of all, to use St. Paul's phrase, all through the years. "The gold is ejected and the dross remains," one of our friends said of us. We were greeted by those who did not know us as a pack of saints, and the legend continued to grow, such a term giving an easy way out to those who felt themselves to be happily more publicans than pharisees. Our standards were too high, could not possibly be lived up to, but it was good to be reminded of them. Such principles would not work, they showed pride and presumption in a way, but they evidenced the longing in every human heart for the lost Eden of the past and the Paradise we all hoped for in the future. We were Utopians, in other words.

Full Freedom

Well, we have hung on to our personalist communitarian philosophy over the years, and it has been called anarchism, pacifism, communitarian socialism and many other things. But through all the years, there was never any criticism from the chancery office in New York, New Jersey, Chicago, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Omaha – wherever there were demonstrations about race or war.

The Baltimore House of Hospitality was closed as a public nuisance. It was inter-racial when it was against the law to have both black and white under the same roof in a hostel. Civil Disobedience began for us then.

Irene Mary Naughton was arrested for picketing in an inter-racial demonstration at Palisades Amusement Park. This was in the forties and was just the beginning of CW involvement. But still the chancery offices never interfered. They never committed themselves either.

Personal History

We were too busy to worry much about the attitudes of individual priests in chancery offices or parishes. Somehow or other, I had always realized that the church was made up of every political viewpoint as well as of saints and sinners, that there was room for all, that people were the product of their environment. Then too I had my own family to remind me, a conservative one in many ways. My own father was most intemperate in his remarks not only about the “foreigner” but about the Negro, coming from Tennessee as he did, and there were my Georgia cracker cousins, hard shelled Baptists, fundamentalists, Campbellites, religious bigots and racists undoubtedly. And yet one could not **hatethem**. They could not prevent one from going one’s own way. So it was the same with the Church, the family of the Church, Churchmen became conservative; had to hang on to the gains made in a country which spoke of Hunkies, Dagoes, Spijs, Micks, greasers and so on. These despised ones showed that they could make it too.

But the people didn’t get much more “instruction” than the Asians St. Francis Xavier reached with the teaching of prayers, and the pouring on of water in baptism. Get to Sunday Mass, make your Easter duty, don’t marry outside the faith,—the grace of the sacraments would do all the rest.

This was my first impression of the church until Peter Maurin opened my eyes to the splendid literature of the church, the social teaching, and I travelled and found like-minded people all over the country. From the first we had the advice and instruction of good and holy, and learned priests,—all of which gave us courage.

Routine Complaints

We were called to the chancery office occasionally. At first I saw only Monsignor McIntyre, and later it was Monsignor Gaffney. It was always over some trivial matter. After a few years, I felt that I understood the technique. I would get a letter reading, “Dear Dorothy, if you happen to be in the neighborhood, would you please drop in.” I very seldom was in the neighborhood of Fiftieth street,—all our work being on the east side, but I took care to go at once. Monsignor McIntyre would greet me in most friendly fashion and then press a button for a stenographer. She would bring in a file, and he would open to a letter, one of a long pile of letters, and holding his hand over the signature, he would say, “We have received a complaint about something in the last issue of the CW,” and he would read out some line like “Would you have your daughter go to

the marriage bed with a Negro?” (I remember that line well. This was from a satirical article by Robert Ludlow.) Quite often the sentiments objected to were from his writings.

There was never any comment. But a few friendly inquiries about the work. I do not recall how many times I had these meetings with Monsignor McIntyre.

I remember once asking him for the use of an unoccupied rectory on the east side. Insurance problems, probable trouble with the board of health and the fire department and building department stood in the way, however.

Backing a Loan

But he tried to help us. Before we got our Peter Maurin Farm on Staten Island, I found a place on the beach down near Tottenville that I wanted very much to buy and Bishop McIntyre, sympathizing with our money problems, offered to back or sponsor a bank loan for us for fifteen thousand dollars but that deal fell through because of the usual housing, health and fire department restrictions, on our work.

No comment was ever made by the by-then bishop or archbishop about political views. When we started to run articles like “War and Conscription at the Bar of Christian Morals,” by Monsignor Barry O’Toole of the Catholic University and “The Crime of Conscription” and “Catholics Can Be Conscientious Objectors,” by Fr. John Jr. Hugo of Pittsburgh, Bishop McIntyre merely commented, during one of these aforesaid visits, “We never studied these things much in the seminary.” Shaking his head, and adding doubtfully, “There is the necessity of course to inform one’s conscience.” And I assured him that that was what we were trying to do.

A recent paper back called **The Essential Newman** carries part of Cardinal Newman’s correspondence with Gladstone in which he discusses **conscience**, and he is reported to have said that if he were called upon to propose a toast on such a subject, which was unlikely, he would propose—“to conscience first, and to the Pope second.” This was at a time when there was great discussion of new dogma, infallibility of the Pope.

Laymen lead

Bishop O’Hara of Kansas City once said to Peter Maurin, “You lead the way,—we will follow.” Meaning that it was up to the laity to plough ahead, to be the vanguard, to be the shock troops, to fight these battles without fear or favor. And to make the mistakes. And that has always been my understanding. This business of “asking Father” what to do about something has never occurred to us. The way I have felt about Los Angeles is that the lay people had to go ahead and form their groups, “Catholics for interracial justice,” form their picket lines,

as they are only now doing, and make their complaints directly, to priest and cardinal, demanding the leadership, the moral example they are entitled to.

How can any priest be prevented from preaching the gospel of social justice in the labor field and in the inter-racial field? One can read aloud with loud agreement those messages from the encyclicals, which are so pertinent to the struggles which are being carried on. One can tell the gospel stories in the light of what is happening today. Do the poor have the gospel preached to them today? Do we hear that resounding cry, "Woe to the rich!" Do we hear the story of the rich man sitting at his table feasting while the poor sat at the gate with neither food nor medicare? How many priests have read Fr. Regamey's **Poverty** or Shewring's **The Rich and the Poor in Christian Tradition**?

Poverty Frees

It is voluntary poverty which needs to be preached to the comfortable congregations, so that a man will not be afraid of losing his job if he speaks out on these issues. So that pastors or congregations will not be afraid of losing the support of rich benefactors. A readiness for poverty, a disposition to accept it, is enough to begin with. We will always get what we need. "Take no thought for what you shall eat or drink,—the Lord knows you have need of these things."

If more seminarians spoke out, even if the seminaries were emptied! (It is said the seminaries of France were half emptied because of the Algerian War, which went on for so long). If more young priests spoke out while they continued to work hard and continued to "be what they wished the other fellow to be," as Peter Maurin put it,—what happy results might not be brought about.

But often the critical spirit results in dissertations, from church and priesthood and seminary, and I suppose that is what the hierarchy fears. We have plenty of experience of the critical spirit and have seen the ravages that can be wrought in family and community. We have had many a good worker leave because he could not stand the frustrations, because "those in charge" did not throw out trouble makers, or force people to do better. The critical spirit can be the complaining spirit too, and the murmurer and complainer does more harm than good.

Freedom With Charity

If we could strive for the spirit of a St. Francis, and it would be good to read his life and struggles, we would be taking a first step, but it is only God himself who can make a saint, can send the grace necessary to enable him to suffer the consequences of following his conscience and to do it in such a way as not to seem to be passing judgment on another, but rather win him to another point of view, with love and with respect.

“You have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, Resist not evil: but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other; and if a man will contend with thee in judgment and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him, and whosoever will force thee to go one mile, go with him another two. Give to him that asketh of thee, and of him that would borrow of thee turn not away. You have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be children of your father who is in heaven who makes his sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust. For if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not even the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? do not also the heathen this? Be you therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Hard sayings indeed and no wonder that St. Peter said, in another context, when Jesus said that it was harder for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than for a rich man to get into the kingdom of heaven, “Who then can be saved?” “With God all things are possible.”

When a man, black or white, reaches the point where he recognizes the worth of his soul (what does it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?)—when he begins to realize what it means to be a child of God, a son, an heir also, the sense of his own dignity as a child of God is so great that no indignity can touch him, or discourage him from working for the common good.

A Greater Task

It is for this that our shepherds are to be reproached, that they have not fed their sheep these strong meats, this doctrine of men divinized by the sacraments, capable of overcoming all obstacles in their advance to that kind of society where it easier to be good.

Let Catholics form their associations, hold their meetings in their own homes, or in a hired hall, or any place else. Nothing should stop them. Let the controversy come out into the open in this way.

But one must always follow one’s conscience, preach the gospel in season, out of season, and that gospel is “all men are brothers.”

This teaching is contained in all the work of the Confraternities of Christian Doctrine. It just needs to be applied.