

Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M.

Introduction

Young Adults: An Urgent Pastoral Agenda

Each article within this issue reminds us that the Church must be ever renewed by each generation. The authors, scholars and pastoral ministers, suggest in a variety of ways that the Catholic community is not doing too well in ministering to the generation of young adults in their twenties and early thirties.

Sometimes, young adults, unkindly designated as "Generation X," the men and women born in the 1960s and 1970s have their own needs and hopes. They also have their own generational history different than those of us born earlier in the century. Young adults are the first truly post-conciliar generation of Catholics. Their early religious education was very different than the one familiar to many of us who now wish to minister to them. Watergate, *Humanae vitae*, the Great Society, Vietnam and Cambodia, Vatican II, these are as unfamiliar to them as a world without personal computers. Despite their youth they, of course, have memories and historical baggage, yet these are quite different than older Catholics.

Each generation must fight its own battles, but there is a danger if one generation imposes its agenda upon another. For a generation known as the Baby Boomers that is a hard lesson to learn. That generation, due to its size, has for so long dominated American society that it has come to think that its concerns, its experiences, its hopes must be the ones which dominate the culture. To permit that to continue within the Church is to make a major error of judgment for it would be to lose touch with a new audience which requires a new pastoral agenda.

In the essays which follow, readers will learn much about what the Christian community can and must do if it is to pass on the faith to young adults. Until now many of this new generation have been inadequately evangelized or catechized. Some have suggested that the post-conciliar generation of adults is spiritually earnest but religiously illiterate. Whatever one makes of such a diagnosis, our authors suggest there is reason for hope precisely in the spiritual energy present among young adults. The challenge before the Church is that many young people are engaged in a spiritual quest outside the ecclesial

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community. It is not evident to these men and women what the Church has to offer them on their pilgrimage. It may even be that they are unsure if the Church welcomes them to find out. If the Catholic Church in this nation is to meet the challenge presented to it to pass on the faith to others it is urgent that pastoral ministers reflect on and act upon material such as presented in this issue of *New Theology Review*.

In the opening essay John Cusick and Katherine DeVries, both of whom have extensive pastoral experience with young adults, speak about the urgency of ministry with and to young adults. Then the prominent sociologist James Davidson presents a summary of his recent research on the religious attitudes of three generations of American Catholics. Allen Gustafson lays out the psychological and spiritual dimensions of the dilemma confronting young adults in our society. He also sketches the implications of the dilemma for the Church's pastoral agenda. Jeremy Langford, himself a young adult, speaks personally about his own journey to faith. Readers will get a sense of the sensitive and thoughtful young people who can greatly enrich the Church if we as a community give heed to their voices. In the fifth essay Margaret O'Brien offers a hopeful and practical reflection on how to develop a spiritual ministry to our young people. Finally, with his characteristic style and insight Richard Sparks suggests that the Catholic moral tradition may be attractive to young adults if it is presented in a theologically sound and pastorally attentive manner.

Two authors, Eugene Bianchi and Andrew Skotnicki, O.Carm., contribute non-thematic articles on challenging issues for the Church.

Also included in this issue are our regular columns, one of which treats the case of discussing church membership with a young adult. A number of book reviews fill out the remainder of this issue.

With this first issue in volume eleven of *New Theology Review*, a new editorial team is at the helm. The noted author and professor of homiletics Robert P. Waznak, S.S., will serve as co-editor along with myself, Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M., professor of moral theology at the Washington Theological Union. Edward Foley, Capuchin, the highly respected professor of liturgy at Catholic Theological Union, is associate editor. Daniel Grigassy, O.F.M., who teaches in the department of word and worship at the WTU, will serve as book review editor. With these changes the editorial offices of the journal are now located in Washington, D.C. Please note the address on the inside front cover. At the end of the book reviews is the style sheet to be followed by authors wishing to submit manuscripts for publication.

The journal will continue to be a work of close collaboration between the faculties of the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and the Washington Theological Union. In closing, the new editors wish to acknowledge the fine work of Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S., the founding editor, and

John Pawlikowski, S.M., our immediate predecessor. These gentlemen and scholars have contributed greatly to the life of the American Catholic Church in our time. Not least among their accomplishments is the work they did for this journal. Our aim is to build on what they have done. We look forward to making *New Theology Review* an important and valued resource for you, our readers.