
RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

*A Draught of
Human Experience*

"Insufficient Guilt in the Room"
by Eugene C. Kennedy, in *America*
(Mar. 27, 1976), 106 W. 56th St.,
New York, N.Y. 10019.

Kennedy, a Catholic priest and psychologist, argues that the old authoritarian Catholic culture is dying and that today's priest must find the meaning of his ministry from within human experience. "A well-developed personal identity is indispensable to effective pastoral ministry," Kennedy writes, yet many priests continue to think of themselves "in the third person," unable to discover who they are apart from their clerical role.

The typical priest chases after the "abstraction" of what a good priest should be, constantly pitting himself against his own sense of guilt or unworthiness. When most priests have no close personal relationships in their lives, how can they hope to understand the people to whom they minister? Kennedy asks. "The clerical life lends itself to the spiritual equivalent of one-night stands."

Kennedy suggests that most decisions to join the priesthood have been rooted in a highly obsessive-compulsive Catholic culture which stresses a "pervasive need to do good and to do well, to avoid guilt and be approved."

Those values were sustained by the authoritarianism of the Church, and today that authoritarianism (as distinct from the *authority* of the Church) is breaking down. Kennedy dates the collapse of authoritarianism to the issuance of the 1968 Papal Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*—"a document that failed to match human experience."

Catholics today have "developed a new trust in their own experience"; they are no longer oriented to enormous guilt, he writes. Thus, the future strength of the Church's ministry depends on the priest's willingness to "put aside the authoritarian clerical mode . . . and build a new declericalized style of ministry in service that matches the theological rhetoric about the Church as a servant."

*Reassessing the
Rhythm Method*

"New Dimensions of Parenthood"
by Bernard Häring, in *Theological
Studies* (Mar. 1976), P.O. Box 1703,
Baltimore, Md. 21203.

Recent medical research may compel the Roman Catholic Church to reexamine its endorsement of the "rhythm method" as an appropriate means of contraception.

Catholic approval of the rhythm method relies on the assumptions that the average life of the human spermatazoa is only 72 hours, that