

St. Anthony of Padua R.C. Church

160 Court Street, Buffalo, New York

TRADITIONALLY SPEAKING by S. Casarotto, CS 9/21/08

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION - According to a recent poll among 36,000 adults by the Pew Forum, more than 90% of Americans believe in God. However, only 75% believe in heaven, less than 60% believe in hell and 50% pray daily. Is it faith or vaporized theism and fideism? Faith without content and personal consequences is no faith. Try to ask children and teenagers to recite the 10 Commandments. They might know only one of them: "Be nice!" Then, ask them to name the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Tough luck. Released just before the World Youth Day in Sydney, the results of a survey among Australian youth revealed that 77% of the 14 to 24 year-olds believe the church is out of touch. The same poll said that 89% of the respondents rejected the Catholic Church's teaching on sexual abstinence before marriage. Similar statistics among U.S. Catholic collegians are causing concern as well. Donna Freitas, Boston University assistant professor, interviewed college students on a broad spectrum of campuses across the nation regarding sexuality and the casual sex "hook-up" mentality prevalent today. "One would think the colleges would divide according to religious affiliation, but they don't," Freitas said. "It's evangelical colleges and everyone else. Students at Catholic schools showed up as nearly identical with regard to their opinions about sex and religion as students at non-religious schools. That's a real wake-up call to Catholic colleges." There are presently more than 200 Catholic colleges and universities in this country involving heavy investment in personnel and finances. If these institutions are supposed to form strong, educated and faith-filled Catholic men and women, why is it that we have such a crisis in vocations, marriages and social/political life?

AGITATIONS IN THE CHURCH

Soon after the Council of Nicea (325 AD), St. Basil wrote: "Harsh rises the cry of the combatants encountering one another in dispute; already all the Church is almost full of the inarticulate screams, the unintelligible noises, rising from the ceaseless agitation that divert the right rule of the doctrine of true religion." St. Basil wrote this line in his book *On the Holy Spirit against the Arians*. He knew that the Church is guided by the Holy Spirit and ultimately He will set things right.

The past 40 years have been less than tranquil in the Church. Many people blame the Church for going too slow, others for going too fast, others still for being off track. It has been said (but this story has never been confirmed) that, when John XXIII called Vatican II, he wanted to "let some fresh air in" as if the Church were old and stuffy and it needed a radical overhaul. In fact, many people understood *aggiornamento* as the adaptation of the Church to the world, but Vatican II reaffirmed that the Church, like Christ, is "light to the nations" and must be set higher on the mountain top to guide and save the world.

St. Paul wrote to his co-worker Timothy: "There will be a time when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires, will surround themselves with teachers who tickle their ears. Preach the word, stay with this task whether convenient or inconvenient, correcting, reproofing, appealing, constantly teaching. (2 Tim. 4,2)." Which reminds me of the old Sicilian shepherd who, while tending his sheep, used to play his bagpipe. People going by kept hearing the same tune day after day. Eventually, somebody said: "Turiddu, you should change your tune!" Turiddu replied: "I don't know another song. I can only play it louder!"