

SPEECH BY J.E.F. AT COMMUNION BREAKFAST - HOLY NAME SOCIETY OF
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I was reading an editorial in the New York Times recently and I was quite impressed with its opening sentence. "It seems to be necessary", the editorial began, "every so often these days, for someone to point out a fact that used to be a matter of common knowledge and accepted as such."

The editorial treated of prices and productivity, but I couldn't help but think how true this expression is in most areas of concern to the average American.

We are presently enjoying one of the greatest industrial booms in all history.

In the field of science, the world has never known such tremendous advances as are becoming commonplace in our age.

In the factories and on the farms the technological developments have increased productivity tremendously and reduced old-fashioned manual labor in like proportion.

In our homes we enjoy - as a matter of course - equipment and facilities which our grandfathers would have considered the height of fantastic luxury.

Yet, with all this advancement - with all these advantages, we are faced with the day to day reminder by educators, sociologists, law-enforcement officers and statesmen that crime, lawlessness - hypocrisy and deceit - are rampant - in our cities and towns - and in the highly vaunted area of international relations.

I remember reading somewhere "No man can disregard God - and play a man's part in God's world." It seems to me that there was a time, not too long ago, when men accepted that as a fact with which there could be no quibbling. But day after day, you must have found as I have, men who are prone to plan activity with complete reliance on material factors and no thought of the need for a prayer. I have noticed, in increasing numbers, the men who satisfy their ego by crediting physical effort and great grey matter with the good fortune which has attended their family life and the portion of this world's goods they have been able to amass. Rarely, today, do we hear that grand old Irish expression - "Thanks be to God."

I don't like to appear in the position of one usurping the province of the Clergy. But I can't help but be concerned when I see what is, in some circles, a rather matter-of-fact indifference toward God, becoming a positive refusal to acknowledge - or perhaps the word should be a positive denial Of - the fact that God plays a vital role in all our lives.

Witness the situation on two levels - maybe we could say - at the bottom and at the top.

In our own state we have grave discussions over "released time"; a place providing that a portion of the day of a child in an elementary school should be devoted to learning something about his Eternal Creator. That I would say is the bottom.

At the top we have the greatest International Organization the world has ever seen - regardless of individual views as to its worth. In this UN organization there appears to be a studied refusal to make reference to the God of the Universe lest we injure the sensibilities of those of our bretheren who preach that Religion is the opiate of the masses.

~~In recent days~~ ^{RECENTLY} I have proposed that the Congress of the United States adopt a Resolution requesting that all sessions of the UN open with prayer. The preamble to that Resolution reads as follows -

"WHEREAS the American People are deeply religious people and our great country was founded on the belief in the dignity of the individual and the rights of free men before God; and whereas men or nations are never without the urgent need for Divine guidance:"

I mention this only to point out that while - throughout our entire history - we have been a Nation acknowledging reliance upon a Supreme Being; and ever grateful, in our public expressions, for all that a Merciful and Just God has done for us - we find in our daily lives little or no concern for the attitude we adopt toward our Maker.

We talk a great deal about the dignity of man - but how often have you seen - in your professional life, your business life, your social life - a complete denial of that dignity. How often have we been guilty ourselves of a refusal to admit that dignity in others while firmly insisting that that dignity be acknowledged in us

We were told as children that "God made me to His image and likeness." We were taught that our founding fathers adopted a Declaration of Independence and a Constitution of these United States which are saturated with an acknowledgement of God - and a firm

belief in the fact that all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with inalienable rights. We were taught in College that man is a social being capable of knowing God and understanding the truth which God has promulgated.

These things we know as Catholics. Of these things we are proud as Americans.

Why then - in Heavens name - can't they assume in our ordinary lives the prominent place to which they are entitled?

There was a time - right here in the midst of this community of homes - when brother helped brother - and ~~stranger~~ ^{friend} helped ~~stranger~~ ^{friend}. When the Gortons and the Hoxsies and others of the thirteen original proprietors of this area we now call Warwick, saw to it that houses were built and barns were raised - that the fields were cut and the grain stored - that cattle were fed and children were cared for - not for any monetary gain; but because all felt they were creatures of God and they owed to their fellow man a helping hand.

God sent the rain and God made the grain grow - and every man, woman and child in those original communities was proud - not merely satisfied - with the part he was able to play in making his brother a success - his community a better community - and in the part he was able to play, small though it may be, in laying the foundation stones for what was to become the greatest Republic ever conceived by man.

And, in the realization

of that great accomplishment those great forbears of all of us proclaimed that they were acting under the "laws of nature and of nature's God.."

How far have we come? How much have we accomplished?

Almost two hundred years have gone by since that Declaration of Independence was adopted - a very small period of time in the light of the eons of time during which this sphere has been hurtling through space.

Yet, with all our great scientific achievements; with super-drugs and health machines beyond our comprehension; with colleges and universities, and great libraries and art museums available to everyone; a crime is committed every 17 seconds - penal institutions have become the scenes of our greatest riots; police, social workers and even members of the clergy - tremble over the problem of juvenile delinquency: International bodies hesitate to acknowledge the existence of their creator!

"No man can disregard God - and play a man's part in God's world".

I confess I am not a sociologist, nor a penologist, nor any of the other "ologists" who study the conduct of man under the various circumstances which appear to have such profound affect on man's conduct. But I am a man in public life. I can speak with some authority from that position which I have occupied for many years.

I want to say to you men, quite frankly, that I grow weary when I talk with men who appear to think that it is the mark of sophistication to indicate that they are not too much concerned with matters which affect their faith. I am irritated when men say "I am sick of being told that he is a daily communicant". I become more than a little upset when I am told that Catholic Philosophy is all right for college kids but it has no place in modern day political science.

No man lives in a vacuum. Society can't exist - particularly the type of society we have helped to create - if American men insist on living in a vacuum.

Every one of us is very much dependent upon each other. As I said, there was a period when every man was proud to help his neighbor - and no man was ashamed to make it evident that he depended, to some extent, upon his neighbor.

We have lived through varying periods of political history. Each one made a positive contribution to the development of this society as we know it.

We were taught as children that the State exists for the people. That all authority comes from the consent of the governed. I want you to know, that in my opinion, this is a two way street.

The average American has a real, clear stake in his government. He must be determined that this government will exist for him - and not he for the state. It is not sufficient to elect a federal legislature, let it create edifying bureaus and raise huge structures. That government - difficult though it may be at times - must be kept constantly aware of the fact that its existence depends upon the approval of the electorate. And I would like to remind you that your government, National - State and City, will reflect you, It will be good or bad - complacent or aggressive - just as you will it. I would like further to suggest, that your government, on all levels, will reflect your attitude toward your fellow man.

A Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court recently said, in a very important decision - "We are a religious people whose institutions presuppose the existence of a Supreme Being". I recommend that thought to you this morning.

If there is a place for God in our daily lives - at home, at the office, in the market place, in our day to day relations with our fellow man - there will be a place for God in our society and in our government. If there is a place for God in the government of these United States - there will be a place for God in international affairs.

Your government, in this city of Warwick, will reflect your determination to help care for your fellow man. Your Federal Government will reflect your interest and concern for the aged, the hungry, the sick and the disabled.

If you, in your daily lives refuse to set before all else your immediate personal concerns; if you refuse to set one class of society in a superior position to all others, your Federal Government will soon demonstrate that its sole purpose is to serve all the people, all the time.

Its functions will cease to be dictated primarily by political concerns. There will be a diminution of the preference for one section of the country over all others; or one class of society over all other groups.

We will get back to fundamentals and government will demonstrate that it is the servant of all the people of the land.

Over the bench where sit the Justices of the Rhode Island Supreme Court there is carved this statement -

Non sub homine - sed sub Deo et Lege -

Not under man - but under God and the Law.