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to location, each provides a setting where aware-and-growing women can share with and learn from one another. A typical chapter meeting might comprise anything from discussion of a new book (e.g., Patricia Gundry's *Heirs Together* or Leonard Swidler's *Biblical Affirmations of Woman*), to hearing a clergy couple talk about their experiences in the pastorate, to viewing a film on sexism in advertising. Some chapters also have small support groups where women can get together and talk on a more informal basis.

Every other year, the wider EWC organization holds a plenary conference. (Its fifth such conference, "Women and the Promise of Restoration," will take place July 21-25, 1982, in Seattle.) Historically, these conferences have been a deep source of affirmation to women struggling, sometimes against great odds, to be true to God's call on their lives. In addition, most EWC chapters sponsor annual or semiannual conferences on various themes.

Evangelical Women's Caucus also publishes a quarterly newsletter, *EWC Update*. Among other things, it features reviews of books of interest to biblical feminists and a resources column. Membership in the international organization (\$15 a year regular, \$5 students or low income) includes a year's subscription to *Update*.

EWC extends a cordial invitation to seminarians interested in or committed to maturity in all spheres of life, to become part of its fellowship. For further information, contact Ann Ramsey Moor, Public Information Officer, 725-G Blair Court, Sunnvale, CA 94087.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

(Probing questions, suggestions, and encouragement in areas of personal and spiritual growth)

TOUGH AND TENDER—A WORD TO GRADUATING SEMINARIANS

By Donald McKim, Lecturer at Westminster College and Stated Supply Pastor of Friendship United Presbyterian Parish (PA).

Dear Graduates,

The three years have raced by quickly. Now it's time to face the church and the world full-time. Many words ring in your ears at graduation: Administer! Counsel! Educate! Preach! Witness! All of these are high on the agenda for the church you have been called to serve. Often these and a host of others will compete for your attention. They will vie for priority. How can you do them all? How will you at times decide from among them? But most importantly: How will you fulfill your task as minister of the Christian gospel with integrity in the midst of a world of oil crises and Three-Mile Islands?

On the eve of their commissioning, Jesus gave his disciples two prescriptions: "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Mt. 10:16).

"Be wise as serpents." To put its meaning in our own terms, Jesus instructed his followers to use their ability for critical reflection. They must draw on all their resources so their work for his kingdom will be intelligent and meaningful. The serpent is the ancient symbol of wisdom. So Jesus commands his followers to bring to their lives and leadership in an antagonistic world, the best thought and experience they can muster.

Merely having a degree from a theological seminary does not insure that you will always be as "wise as a serpent" or that your wisdom will always be the best course. But Christ calls

you to bring the creative intelligence which your training has fostered in you to bear as you work in your churches. Your task as a minister of Christ's Gospel is to bring to your people the very best you can offer in helping them to think critically and theologically about their problems, this world, and the Word of God for each of us. At best you will be an "amateur" theologian. We all are. None of us ever really "arrive." Yet you must bring to your people the most acute theological thinking of which you are capable. The world and the church with all our problems demand no less. There is a tough-mindedness to the ministerial task: "Be wise as serpents."

But Jesus goes on to command: "Be harmless as doves." To put it another way, Jesus calls us to use our capacity to love. The dove was a proverbial symbol of gentleness, of simplicity. And though we may be as sharp as Socrates and as brilliant as Barth, if we have not love — the world will never take us seriously. One of our greatest enemies in the church and as ministers is the credibility gap. There is so often that yawning chasm between our faith profession and our performance where we live.

We must communicate credibility. We are not called to be skillful manipulators or efficient experts in church growth through techniques alone. We work and witness by the congruence of our lives and our churches' lives with the message we proclaim and embody. What Joe Namath really believes about the popcorn poppers or after-shave he splashes on television really doesn't count for much. But for we who are ambassadors for Christ it is altogether different. Our message must have integrity and it must be matched by the identity of our lives with the life Christ calls for.

"Be as innocent as doves." Put into practice your power to love. For love is the tender medium through which our ministries move. Murdo Macdonald, who has interpreted Jesus' words as outlined above, reminds us that in his autobiography, Berdyaev the Russian philosopher describes the case of Mother Maria. When the Nazis were liquidating Jews in their gas chambers, one sobbing mother would not part with her baby. The officer in charge was only interested in the correct number of persons to be killed. So Mother Maria, without a word, pushed that mother aside and quietly took her place in line. This was what brought Berdyaev into the Christian faith—not elaborate philosophies or even scrupulous theology. But it was this costly act of love which gave credibility to the Gospel message.

Take this command of Christ as your own as you graduate from seminary. Let it influence the way you live and work as Christ's servants. Be tough-minded; be tender-hearted. As Jesus said, "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." God bless you in your ministry.

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HENRI NOUWEN: SPIRITUAL GUIDE FOR A CHURCH IN TRANSITION By Robert Durback

One of the finest moments of vaudeville in the forties was when Jimmy Durante would run excitedly to the center of the stage before an electrified audience and yell: "STOP THE MUSIC!" The band, which had been going full blast with trumpet, sac, and clarinet, piano, drum, fiddle and bass, would come to a squealing halt. The music stopper would then proceed to castigate his accompanists, flaying them for a false

note picked up by his sensitive ear. Sometimes he would get violent. A pianist might look on in horror to see his piano music snatched up and reduced to confetti in the hands of the mad professor. Pacing the stage like a lion, Durante would continue his Dur-ranting, punctuating his sentences with yet another fistful of shredded music hurled into the audience. Only after having thoroughly raked his wayward supporters over the coals and lectured them on the difference between "schmos" and professionals would Jimmy regain his composure, turn on his famous smile, and permit the show to go on.

Somehow I have to turn to Jimmy Durante to explain who Henri Nouwen is. Many readers may never have heard of Father Henri Nouwen, a Dutch priest currently living and teaching in this country. Those who have, and have read his books and listened to his lectures and tapes, may be shocked that I would be so irreverent as to compare him with singer-comedian Jimmy Durante, of beloved, but definitely not scholastic, memory.

But I insist. Nouwen, to be sure, is no double for Durante. But he is a music stopper. And music stoppers are very important to our world. Music stoppers are the world's custodians of quality control. And quality control is what keeps rich, nutty fruitcakes from coming out of the oven looking like Aunt Jemima pancakes. Quality control is what makes the difference between someone who can play the fiddle, and someone who can make his violin cry.

Professor of pastoral theology at Yale Divinity School, Nouwen is no ordinary run-of-the-mill spiritual writer. What was once said of Thomas Merton might best characterize one of the qualities in Nouwen's writing that makes him a best-seller in Catholic and ecumenical circles today: He has a built-in radar for phoniness that beeps at all the right moments.

Typical of his approach is a story he tells, quoting a Vietnamese Buddhist monk: "There was a man on a horse galloping swiftly along the road. An old farmer standing in the fields, seeing him pass by, called out, 'Hey, rider, where are you going?' The rider turned around and shouted back, 'Don't ask me just ask my horse!'"

Who, in the Church we live in today, has not at one time or another caught oneself wondering: Does anyone know where this horse is going? Theologians disagree with the Pope. The Pope disagrees with the world; and nuns wearing armbands disagree with the theologians, the Pope, and the world. It is in this bewildering context that Nouwen has emerged as one of the most sought-after speakers and spiritual writers of our day. Many in the Church today are angry and frustrated as the Church they once looked to for direction and guidance seems to offer them only the bitter spectacle of wrangling and dissension.

Nouwen offers another alternative: a vision of Church invited to move from disputation to contemplation. With the deftness and skill of a Houdini he has consistently managed to slip through the tangled web of theological debates that have too often tended to polarize and paralyze. Combining the insights of modern psychology with the proven wisdom of traditional spirituality he leads his readers to open spaces where they can once again connect their life stories with the Great Story of God's love as revealed in the Scriptures. The Nouwen trademark, easily recognizable in his theological reflection, is: *connectedness with real life*. For Nouwen it is out of the raw materials of ordinary, day to day living that the experience of God in prayer is born.

And if you dig beneath all the unrest and sense of betrayal prevalent in the Church today, you are likely to find that what the contemporary Christian seeks, and feels he or she is not getting through "official" sources, is precisely: *experience of God*—on a deep, personal level. It is to this hunger that the ministry of Henri Nouwen responds.

Of the thirteen books he has published to date special mention must be made of *Creative Ministry* (Doubleday, 1971), where Nouwen lays the groundwork on which much of his sub-

sequent thought builds. Here he sounds the keynote, thematic of all his writings. For Nouwen: "Ministry means the ongoing attempt to put one's own search for God, with all the moments of pain and joy, despair and hope, at the disposal of those who want to join this search but do not know how."

"To put one's own search for God . . . at the disposal of those who want to join in this search but do not know how." This is Henri Nouwen's unique gift to the Church in a time of transition.

Robert Durback, a mail carrier in Cleveland, is a member of St. Angela Parish. He has spent over six years studying theology and philosophy, including four years at Gethsemani in Kentucky when Thomas Merton was there. A personal friend of Henri Nouwen, Durback wrote this article to a parish newsletter to introduce others to the exceptionally rich resources of Nouwen. Soon, Nouwen will move to Peru in order "to learn from being with" the poor as a minister in a Lima parish.

Henri Nouwen Bibliography

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With Open Hands Ave Maria Press, 1972.
Thomas Merton, Contemplative Critic (formerly *Pray to Live*) Fides, 1972.
Wounded Healer Doubleday, 1972.
Aging Doubleday Image, 1974.
Out of Solitude Ave Maria, 1974.
Reaching Out Doubleday, 1975.
Genessee Diary Doubleday, 1976.
Living Reminder Seabury, 1977.
Clowning in Rome Doubleday Image, 1979.
In Memoriam Ave Maria, 1980.
The Way of the Heart Seabury, 1981.

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