

*Fashion Me a People: Man, Woman, and the Church.. Eugene C. Kennedy. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967.*

## **Introduction**

This book reflects Kennedy's reflections on the human issues involved in the process of *renewal*.

“... sources of stimulation.”

“Full *manhood* and *womanhood* is indispensable to the members of the Church called to be a people together for the sake of all men.”

Freedom: the environment for true growth in the life of the Spirit.

Ergo, the need for human and flexible institutional force.

## **PART ONE: THE CHURCH AS A PERSON**

### **Chapter ONE: The Silent Schism**

The Church is presently experiencing the *stresses* of reorganizing and reordering itself in the world of men which has entered a new age of exploration and discovery.

A silent *schism*: the reflection of the fragmented and developing state of the Church at this time.

- **The Meaning of the Church**

Post-conciliar failure of Christian preaching/teaching to illumine renewed Christian practice.

Communications *gap*.

Many emblems of Catholic practice are gone and with them, in many cases, has gone the quality of psychological cohesiveness and stability.

- **The Clergy**

Priesthood in the throes of growth toward more independent and responsible manhood.

Many react against what they perceive as a distant authoritarianism in ecclesiastical structure.

If an ordinary ignores this or shunts it aside, tension increases and the gap widens.

A new relationship must be acknowledged and developed in the apostolate.

These same priests find deep questions of personal and professional identity proposed to them.

The ‘image’ of the priest has shifted radically.

They have had to contemplate the possibility that what they have provided was veneer rather than substance.

- The Laity

A better educated laity feels the same desire to share in the responsibility of the People of God.

Many are frustrated by a lack of visible structures to make this a reality.

Many are departing from the practice of the faith as it was practiced by their parents.

- Religious

Deep questions about the size, purpose, and styles of life of religious groups are being posed by the most sincere and dedicated members of these communities.

These people are willing to embrace poverty, chastity, and obedience, but they are newly sensitive to their birthrights as human persons and they are not ready to cashier these unconsciously any more.

The great task is to begin to think out and bring into being the structures that will carry the Church into the twenty-first century.

The time is *now* to think and plan, rather than wail and despair.

Attempt to understand the men and women who are the Church.

Attempt to provide adequate human directions for the expression of the Church's mission.

## **Chapter TWO: Man, Woman, and the Church**

In the man/woman relationship, *growth* pivots on the *total* relationship of the partners with each other, on their thorough *sharing* of self and life together.

*Mutuality* and equality of the sexes.

If humanity is to have *fullness*, it comes only through the growth of men and women in concrete relationship to one another.

The Church as People of God grows only through its human elements.

*Love* is the vital sign of people sharing life generously together.

God's action in the world is always accommodated to the *human condition*.

The only forces that can frustrate the action of the Spirit are the scabrous *defenses* that men clutch at to protect their self-esteem.

If we are ever to bring mature love into the world, it will grow in its only possible environment, the men and women who, as the People of God, are *open* to a full share of life together.

The 'old man' must die before the 'new man' can come to life from within.

The Spirit 'acts' in the world through *personal relationships*.

The New Pentecost reaches institutions through individuals in relationship to one another.

God's work in the world depends, then, on our full realization of the manhood and womanhood of the People of God in relationship to one another.

Without confronting the nature of the persons who are the People of God, no understanding of the Church itself is possible.

The sign of the post-conciliar times underscores personal freedom and points a decentralization of power.

*Collegial* concept of authority as service to the People of God, themselves a community of loving persons.

The task (*contra* restorationists and anarchists) is to develop new and healthy structures that will allow the church to place itself properly at the service of the human family.

If the Church is to find itself, it will be because the men and women within it have first found the fullness of themselves.

Pilgrim Church: need for constant and ongoing growth and development.

The message of the biblical authors (e.g., Hosea) was that there can be no flicker of understanding God's faithfulness if we do not understand something about the intensity for sharing life that lovers know.

The Church as the extension of the Incarnation can enflesh itself as the mystery of love only when it is able to allow the Spirit to speak through the human beings who are God's people.

The mystery of the growth of the human race into a community depends on the *healthy interaction* throughout the Church of its masculine and feminine elements.

### **Chapter THREE: The Dimensions of Humanity**

Pope John's hope in calling a council: "... so that man's sojourn on earth might be less sad."

Hope that is not overidealized and unrealistic.

Believing in man without denying his failures.

Our task bids us to uncover the truth about man.

Openness to the whole of experience.

Scripture and psychology both attest to the *oneness* of man.

Man, the culmination of creation, *balances* and *blends* features of his humanity in the wholeness of his person.

The authentically healthy person represents a balance of masculine and feminine elements.

The real man and the real woman find the *fulfillment* of their humanity, pursuing their individual stars and realizing their gifts, in ceding themselves to each other.

Jesus's full manhood seems, in so many of his relationships, to bring out the fullness of the women with whom he came in contact.

Maturity of adjustment is not a matter of extremes; it is rather a question of the mature balance of the inexhaustible wealth of all that is human in every man and woman.

This is the *creative* font of mankind, the source of new life for the world, and the model on which any deep understanding of the People of God must be based.

#### **Chapter FOUR: The Church as a Person**

Considering the Church as a person, we look for the signs of psychological maturity that we should look for in any individual.

Vatican II: authentic *self-examination*.

The process of growth requires that the person be strong enough to endure self-disorganization in view of a healthier self-reorganization built on the truth.

*A continuing process, built on sustained and deepening openness to the self.*

The Church is badly in need of a redress of its male-female balance.

The Church does not find the *truth* of its being unless it faces the *totality* of its inner composition.

The balanced *interplay* of masculine and feminine elements is the source of its vitality and the guarantee of its continued growth necessary if the Church is truly to re-create the world.

Consequences of the over-masculinization of the Church:

- Crusades;
- Power-oriented manipulations of peoples in the name of truth;
- Coercion and censorship;
- Religious practice comes to be considered a somewhat feminine thing;
- Women have been forced to use masculine means to make their way into the world of men.

One concept which must be dropped is the incredibly identification of the Church's core with the relatively small cluster of clergy and religious.

When a person discards defenses, he becomes more approachable by others: *ecumenism*.

So, too, it is more understanding of others.

The journey to full personal development demands *continuous forward movement*.

The achievement of one stage of growth reveals itself as an *invitation* to move on to the next.

The Church's continuing maturity depends on its members' constant movement toward complete manhood and womanhood.

*Mission:* The Church presents an incarnate community of love only when its members are grown fully enough to give themselves totally, trustingly, and together to the service of mankind.

The world of men, full of fears and pain, has a right to the human response of men and women adult enough to understand and enter into its grief; it has a right to be the kind of *redemptive relationship* that can only come from the fully grown.

## **PART TWO: GROWTH IN THE SPIRIT**

### **Chapter FIVE: The Male Mystique**

The *uncertain male* needs constant proof of his virility.

E.g., Ernest Hemingway.

'Male order masculinity'.

Some who oppose the discipline of celibacy in the Church's clergy are caught in this trap: 'I am a man and I need a woman to fulfill me as a man and, therefore, I should be free to have a woman who can do this for me'.

Reflects naivete about the meaning of persons.

To relate to women solely for what they can do for us is not really much more profound than the philosophy of Hugh Hefner.

Symbiotic and *selfish*.

It is a sad truth that the condition of priestly and religious life almost make it impossible for people to experience the meaning of real love.

To preserve virginity like a shrunken and fragile treasure under shatterproof glass, with the other virtues clustered about it like a well-armed but apprehensive museum guard, is to store a relic that no longer moves the world.

The illusion that marriage interferes with dedication, productivity, and/or true greatness in loving our fellowmen should be dispelled forever.

The basic problem is the *existential* one of learning to love other human beings humanly, fully, and unselfishly.

This is true for all persons, celibate or married.

Priesthood and religious life offer ideal conditions for *superficial* relationships.

It is difficult for healthy lay people to believe that anyone could seriously debate the place of real friends in life, but over and over again this question is raised in journals directed toward members of religious groups.

A priest is often more comfortable doing things for others than in being someone for them.

Both marriage and celibacy turn on an appreciation of the deep personal *demands* that loving another makes of us.

The Spirit is the source for all lovers, and his flames gutter out in personalities that are too shallow or too closed off out of fear.

Only grown-up men with real senses of values, men scarred by living, men seared and matured by the flames of the Spirit can understand other men and something of the God who is Love; they will be the agents of the world's redemption.

We have to face the problem of human love, in marriage and religious life, as the action of the Spirit in uniting men and we have to take a close and unblinking look at the institutional structures that have hobbled the Spirit and impoverished us at the same time.

### **Chapter SIX: The Women Who Are More Than Poor**

It is because the Church, together with everyone in it, is growing up that we find pain in our lives today; this is the great sign of life, not of imminent death – and we can be grateful for it.

If religion is going to be real to a people that is ravening for it, it will be because we priests and religious are real, because we have been able to put away our playthings, let our dreams die, and enter fully into the human condition.

A life of faith is meant to be a mystery but not so mysterious that it is lived in any other world but the *anxious* and *pain-filled* one into which God sent His only Son.

Many of the old models of the religious life are spent of their usefulness.

The task is to strike out, under the guidance of the Spirit, in healthy new directions.

Religious women are faced with the very difficult challenge to grow up as women in the church, to bring the fullness of their womanhood to the Church which is so in need of it.

It takes great courage, the kind of patient strength women have, to face the challenge and not be frightened off by it.

The Church's women must be fruitful virgins and faithful wives, not for the pleasant poetry of these phrases, but for the rock-bottom reality of their vocation in the Church.

Mary's deep human interaction, as woman and mother, with her son flowed from the full realization of her fruitful virginity.

At Cana, Mary is a clear revelation of woman's vital importance in the Church: she is the mother who, open and sensitive to the needs of others, acted as the human agent in opening Jesus as well.

The *loving relationship* between Mary and Joseph must be perceived as the strongest factor in the development of the manhood of Jesus.

The great role for sisters is to bring *womanhood* into the Church, in healthy relationship with the men who also serve the Church.

*Implications of this for renewal:*

- The conditions of their lives must be the normal and healthy ones necessary for the growth of full women.
- They need the conditions that allow them to grow in a healthy way from within, and the freeing of this growth is the principal charge of those in *authority*.
- Mass institutions slowly put to death people who are meant for a full life.

The work of the Church cannot be accomplished without an ever-deepening sharing of the vocation of men and women within it.

### **Chapter SEVEN: Sexuality and Emotional Maturity**

We have focused so much on sex that its larger meaning in man has been distorted and misunderstood.

- Neither animalistic exploitation;
- Nor overromanticization/overspiritualization.

The understanding *encounter with the self* is fundamental to any integration and mature control of the self.

Man's maturity, the integration of all that he is, begins when he accepts and embraces fully his incarnation in the human family.

*Sexuality* is a healthy and positive dimension of personality that has expression in each man's words and work.

Two opposite extremes have an over-focus on genital sexuality:

1. There is something almost unbearably and about the aging playboy who thinks it is the height of manhood to nurse himself at the breasts so bountifully proffered to him in the topless topography of the twentieth century. Bunny turns out to be a mother comforting and reassuring him that is all right to be a boy forever. The sadness lies, not in that anyone would call this a sin, but that anyone would call it sophistication.
2. Just as restricted in their outlook are those Christians who hold up a narrow view of overmystical sexuality, an intellectual beatific vision of love at the summit.

Emotional maturity does not demand absolute perfection from a man, but it does demand *truth*.

When we embrace the human condition realistically we allow ourselves room to grow, intellectually, emotionally, sexuality, in an harmonious and integrated fashion.

The Spirit of Love, once we share it, bids us to attain the full possibilities of our humanity.

The Gospels speak of men who are lost and find themselves through opening themselves to God.

*Emotionally mature sexuality* for the married or the celibate flows out of their fuller growth as persons in relationship to other persons under the guidance of the Spirit.

It is through our humanity that the Spirit acts, and it is to a fullness of our humanity that the Spirit leads us.

Man must find *all* of himself, not just his sexuality or rationality, if he would have the whole of himself to give to anyone.

The love of great caring and trust, communion, gently opens out into newer and deeper dimensions that they must enter in faith.

This deep love, the life of the Spirit, provides the only real insight we have into God who would share his life eternally with us.

Maturity means full growth, the full understanding and love of ourselves, that frees us to give our whole selves ever more fully in love.

A fully *integrated* sexuality is found only in those who have some feeling for the breathtaking *demands* on their *total* selves that life-giving love demands.

Only when this is understood can the genital expression of sexuality in marriage or the sacrifice of it in celibacy be comprehended or lived with any kind of meaning.

#### **Chapter EIGHT: Celibacy – Clamors and Quiet Questions**

Before it can be discussed, the ideal of celibacy must be refurbished and reidentified.

The ideal of celibacy must first be perceived as a *gift* of the spirit.

Celibacy is not a necessarily abnormal state.

Seen with the eyes of *faith*, celibacy is a gift of God that fits the way men are made and enables certain men and women to give all they are in the service of others.

All they are in the service of others.

Human lives dominated by loving faith may be the last best chance of redeeming religion from its widely proclaimed irrelevance.

It is not that there has been too much celibacy for the tastes of the world; it is that there has been too little *sacrificial* celibacy witnessed in the world.

Men and women, signed with the cross of religious profession, are facing themselves, the whole undefended gamut of their deepest personal feelings, not to surrender in self-delusion to them, but with a deepened willingness to give all of themselves in great fullness to others.

They are as unimpressed by the unrealistic and inhuman arguments often presented for celibacy as they are by the archly uninformed arguments frequently proposed against it.

If sex without love is a sin, celibacy without love is also a sin.



The large questions are concerned with whether the institutional Church can make room for healthy celibate love, whether it can dare to believe that what it proclaims about the action of the Spirit in the hearts of men is indeed true.

The whole meaning of this gift of love is to develop fully the manhood and womanhood of the Church's servants so that their gift of themselves to the People of God will be as total and as effective as possible.

The only persons who can attain the fullness of holiness, the full presence of the Spirit within them are those who can attain the *fullness* of their humanity.

Too often, the ranks of priests and religious have been filled with 'homosexual virgins'.

No celibacy or chastity will move the world unless it is embraced and lived *sacrificially* by thoroughly *developed* men and women.

### **Chapter NINE: Health and Holiness in the Church**

Only the normal person is conscious enough of his own needs not to be mastered by them.

Basically *healthy* people possess the fundamental soundness to pass through difficult stages and to continue to grow toward greater *selflessness*.

"*Openness*."

The Church is shifting from excessive control to greater *personal freedom*:

1. Unhealthy people whose inadequacy or pathology was previously masked by rigid control in institutionalized living are disintegrating in an atmosphere of freedom, trust, and uncertainty.
2. Healthy individuals are undergoing severe trials in groups or dioceses or seminaries where the atmosphere has not been affected by Vatican II and its renewed vision of the Church.

Only when the renewed religious life emerges as a life for grown-up people will the vocation problem be alleviated.

The action of the Spirit will be blunted by anything less than an insistence on the fullness of manhood and womanhood that alone can bring life to the full to the Church.

The great mark of *holiness* will be manifested to the world only through men and women who have first achieved their own *wholeness*; it takes healthy men and women to love their enemies, to give all of themselves to others, and to heal the wounds of the human race.

## **PART III: FORMS FOR THE FUTURE**

### **Chapter TEN: Values for the Future**

Many Catholics cannot forgive themselves for the faith they gave so unquestioningly to structures and categories that have now proved flimsy and incapable of giving either protection or comfort.

Yet now they find it reassuring to get back to the decent and distracting details of life and to leave unsolved the more *fundamental* problems of their environment.

For true renewal we must be *pilgrims* trying to shape the *future*.

Too often churchmen have limited rather than inspired the world.

The basic problem of the next generation will center on the *meaning* of man in the new environment he is creating for himself.

Men, if they are wise, can only prepare themselves for the new and unusual atmosphere of a post-industrial world.

In the balance of this century man will complete the conquest and control of his external and internal environment; then, at last, in his leisure, he will search out more deeply the *explanation and purpose of his existence*.

Will the churches be ready for the real problems of the survival of man and society in this new world?

Prelates and priests, the pious everywhere are face to face with the almost unbearable pressure of tomorrow and this is the source of universal un verbalized *anxiety*.

The mythology of modern renewal resides in our delay over details that allow us to express our anxiety but which also distrust us from its real source.

Christians of today, liberated from the confines of the past, are the only ones who can deliver the much needed gift of *hope* for men in the future.

The awesome gut problem of the present is to face the future in faith, to inform it with hope, and to give it the love that is man's sole source of life to the full.

### **Chapter ELEVEN: From Politics to Personalism**

*Collegiality* demands that the apostolate be rooted in human relationships.

The great basis for the future of the Church is Christians *sharing* life in open and trusting fashion even in the administration of the Church.

This demands great *patience*.

Structures: smaller, with servant orientation to the larger community of men.

An *authority of service*:

- Tempering of a masculine excess with healthy feminine elements;
- Authoritarianism is expiring as a viable ecclesiastical process.

The atmosphere of freedom and collegiality are the soul of renewal.

In summary, the great development of the Church as the People of God in this world demands a wholehearted embrace of its vocation of service. This includes a renewed understanding of the meaning of its authority and a rejection of authoritarianism in principle and in practice. This growth to a mature community of loving persons will depend on the Church's realistic acceptance of collegiality. This will

develop only if the Church allows itself to experience the full measure of its balanced masculine and feminine elements.

### **Chapter TWELVE: Citadel or Community**

Whenever a healthy and productive community exists, the realities of human relationships are the source of its energy and zeal.

This is the vision and spirit of the *founders* of religious communities, which must be rediscovered and translated into twentieth-century terms.

In this time of change, it becomes more and more realistic to break communities down into subgroups or subcommunities which enable the development of compatible and healthy relationships and which are allowed to function with a good deal of autonomy.

The false god of physical community must give way to new forms that will be more mobile and that will not be circumscribed by the parameters of time and space.

The communities that will count in the future will arise between people who understand each other and whose presence, even at a distance, makes a profound difference in each other's lives.

Centrality of the *Eucharist*: It is through opening themselves to each other in the heart of the mystery of Christ's own sacrifice that community members realistically find themselves and return with a surer gift of themselves for other men.

It is inconceivable that the Church could endorse freedom for all mankind and not come to insist upon it for its own servants at the same time.

### **Chapter THIRTEEN: Training for Tomorrow**

A man cannot be successfully prepared to lead a life of the Spirit in a hurried and unforgiving world by training adapted from a monastic ideal of existence.

The seminarian must confront the maturing experience of being *responsible* for another.

The seminary must serve the community and people in which it finds itself.

If the Church is men and women, then, it has to be that way during periods of preparation for the apostolate as well.

It is precisely because *love* is more than poetry and Bible quoting that the training program of the future must reach into the innards of the next generation of priests and religious.

