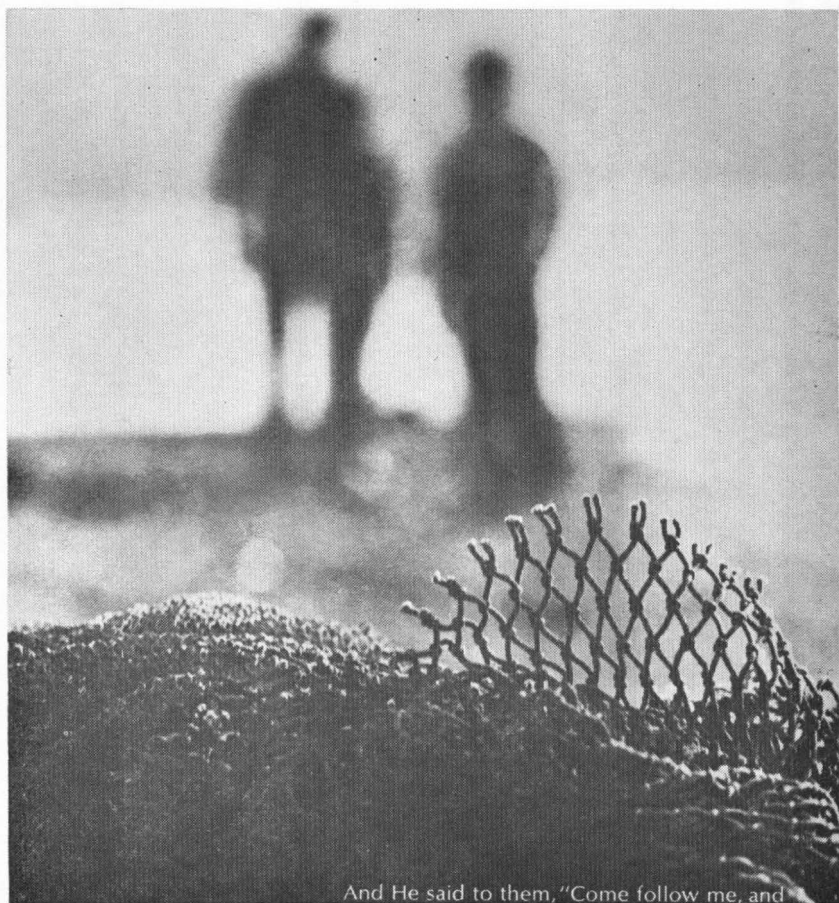


editorial

"Your Honor, I have nothing to say that might mitigate my punishment. I do wish to point out that I feel that I have been a part of no conspiracy, rather I have been part of a movement, a movement that is led by my generation. I feel that we have frightened some people in the government who have decided that what we have created out of love must out of fear be labelled a crime. I can't leave that movement, I will return working in it, I have no regrets." (Michael Ferber to the Court in Boston before being sentenced to two years imprisonment and fined \$1,000 for anti-war activities.)



And He said to them, "Come follow me, and

If one were to have read this statement out of the context of the "Spock Trial" of last Spring, one would be hard pressed to discern exactly in what generation it was uttered, or by whom it was stated. In fact, one could picture, as having said this, any of those numerous Christians throughout the history of mankind who have endured persecution, even death itself, for the sake of the love which is Christ, but who remained steadfast in face of oppression which feared the love they professed. Is this quite as ridiculous as it sounds, that men could really *fear* love? I think, truthfully, that many do, and precisely because love, above all, is demanding.

Even a brief perusal of the New Testament shows Jesus, love itself, who knew, participated in, and savored life in all its manifold dimensions, as a man who was the epitome of love, freedom, and authority. Christ was both free *from* sin, and free *for* attending to the needs of mankind, even to the extent of being free to be obedient unto death, even death on a cross. He was free in conversation, free in friendship, and His Spirit brought to parturition, as it still does, the loyalties and commitments which have characterized His followers since Pentecost 2,000 years ago.

Furthermore, Jesus was a man of authority, but His authority was more than "ruling" authority, it was also "power" in a deep, personal sense. Jesus had power over those He encountered, power to bring forth in man his self-identity. We are all familiar with the Gospels account of the rich young man who asked Christ what he must do to be saved (Matt. 19:16-22). Jesus' reply ultimately was that he should give up all that he had, and come, follow him. It is interesting to note that Christ did not ask of him any great number of good works or suggest that he go off and seek a deeper prayer life, but rather he sought to get behind the question to the man himself to penetrate the disguised disintegration of self which that young man was experiencing, and to tell him that if he wanted to give meaning and direction to his life, he should follow Him, but devoid of those things which hindered *his* full potential to love.

Freedom can only be achieved by one who is an integrated person. The free man is said to be free from environmental and self-imposed strictures and restraints, but the basic emotional strangle-hold which prevents the flowering of freedom, especially among those who have been called to religious life, is a freedom which is individualistic. It must be remembered that in offering self-coherence to the young man, Jesus said: "Come, follow *Me*." It is only to the extent that the reli-

gious finds the coherence of his life in Jesus that He will experience the love which is Christian.

The freedom to love as a Christian must show itself not in an abstract concern or merely in an intent to love, but rather in a constructive creativity of actual love, a love which meets each member of his community in situations which give birth to loving each in a different way, each in a way which differs both from the last time such an encounter occurred and from the person he last conversed with. Each person we meet is unique; each act of love is unique. Love must not be thought of as a habit in the sense of our doing something in an automatic fashion. The habit of love consists in disposing ourselves to be able to love creatively by constant and persistent repetition of acts of love which are constructive. The Christian, too, must keep strictly in mind that he enjoys his freedom within the wider context of community and with a view towards the unity of mankind which Christian love seeks to effect.

The Christian community is a community of free people, but this phrase "free people" has a specifically Christian nuance which many today have lost sight of. A "free people" is a virtuous people with respect for authentic authority which comes from God (Romans 13). The "free" person in community must passionately pursue the idea of freedom, yet never give chase to this ideal so madly as to rush over the edge of the abyss into sheer libertarianism, so that he is dubbed an "outlaw conscience", the conscience which, in fact, knows no higher law than its own subjective clan.

Freedom, as we have said, is freedom to love; it is not, however, freedom from law—human or divine. Even the oft quoted phrase of Saint Augustine: "Love and do what you will" is not a mandate for irresponsibility either in the area of personal moral law or that governing the religious community. One who loves as Christ did has no need of law because he *is* the law. For law ultimately commands love, and to love constantly and creatively is to live the law perfectly. The love of such a one is perpetually contagious. But where is the man who does so that we may praise him? Unfortunately, all of us are yet striving for total coherence in Christ and none of us is yet above the law so that we are laws unto ourselves. If we are, we had best depart from the community of man, for our survival will depend upon it!

ALAN MILMORE, O.P., *Editor*