



EMMETT J. KELLY

... sanctity of the family

What My Religion Means to Me

Conscience Rule Gives Tolerance For Other Faiths

A semi-retired lawyer, Mr. Kelly is the father of seven children. He practiced law in Illinois and Michigan before coming to Florida to live in Riviera Beach. He is a Roman Catholic.

By EMMETT J. KELLY

I find twin difficulties in writing about the importance of my faith in my daily activities; first, it is impossible to refer to my faith or religion without making comment on my personal life, with the attendant danger of appearing egotistical; secondly, I cannot have any of my thoughts as expressed appear a challenge, or affront to the sincere spiritual belief of any of my fellow men.

To even give thought, much less expression, to such intolerance, is open defiance of the basic principals of religion itself.

My professional life has been spent, as an attorney, and I have no hesitancy in saying that in these days of financial complicity, a lawyer's office is a very active laboratory for testing moral integrity. Here a choice of roads is offered—a conscientious effort to ferret out both truth and justice, or in the alternative, the attainment of ones own selfish objective regardless of the unmoral although possibly legal means used.

I firmly believe that true religion can exist and be nourished best through good and God fearing family ties. My religion was born, and subsequently strengthened by the beautiful faith exemplified by my dear mother and father, who have passed to their reward.

My father also an attorney, and an excellent one, taught me as an embryo lawyer that my faith offered me one, and only one inflexible norm of morality, namely, that justice and right as outlined by the law of God, must apply and be applied to everyone, and that I must always try to interpret God's justice, even if need be at my own expense and to my seeming detriment. It is my faith, imparted to me by God through my parents, which prevents this sentiment from being mere lip service.

I LEARNED from my catechism that I must someday account to God for every action of my life, and the stewardship entrusted to me. This item of theology is to me both judge and jury.

In all things my own conscience must be followed. This thought has a two-fold effect. This first is obvious: the second is that while I am a Catholic I must respect the religious beliefs of others, who have in their own good conscience embraced a faith differing from mine. Christ foresaw that unfortunate religious intolerance would be the source of many conflicts, for He said; "There will be wars and rumors of war."

My health necessitated my partial retirement from active legal work about two years ago. It was then that my religion brought me the greater consolation, in its teaching on the solidarity and sanctity of the family.

Rearing seven children, as every Pater Familias will agree, has been a full time job for the past quarter century, and without the aid and direction of my wife, an impossible one. A momentary feeling of relegation to the "has been" class was replaced, through faith, by the realization that God's Wisdom had gone far beyond any legal occupation, and the discovery, the real intimate discovery of my own family, was to me a "second spring."

The wholesome fact of beautiful, basic living unfolded within me, and for the first time. I realized that my business activities were not life itself. A necessary factor in existence, granted, but at best they were properties which surrounded the life of my family.

As time goes on I am increasingly impressed with God's Wisdom in the affairs of men, and I am humbly grateful that He gave me the faith to grasp His Divine Will, and the cognizance to value His benevolence toward me and mine.