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Charge by

Dr. Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy, *April 25, 1942.*

Roy, our reverend and beloved Senior, Dr. Ambrose Vernon, could he be here, would load his charge with the authority of a successful ministry: I am going to speak to you as one soldier to another.

We celebrate today, we are shaken by sublime emotions, we are elated. However, if an ordination were just a day in dulci júbilo outside this real world of fear and war, the church might seem to waste her authority on you as another harmless and nice human being. Your ministry, for all this glorious ceremony, might still end in childishness.

And if, on the other hand, this ordination consisted only in a routine weekday business of an examination after a number of lawful steps, ~~again~~, there would be danger. The Church then might seem to sell her grace to a man for his work without grace. And your ministry would be ruined by sterility.

Obviously, your ordination is a unity of week day and holiday, and on this weekend, there is neither legality nor ~~veritas~~, Hallelujah, *alone*.

But sterility and childishness are the perpetual dangers of the ministry. They were blind

alleys into which you were led. Against these two sins, original sins of man under the pressure of the spirit, you fought your first battles. I am standing here as their witness, and now I charge you to win the whole war.

You came to know the Church radically in its two aspects, as institution and as surprise, as memory and as promise, as law and as miracle. And you came to know that either one without the other leads to hell.

Roy, if you wish to win the war, become an expert of the two enemies of the Church, childishness and sterility, the two enemies of your own life. Know the enemy, honor your first defeats and victories and cultivate the habit of conquest, by facing the danger for the whole Church squarely.

You have special reason for this in the fact that you may not have a regular parish for quite a long time to come. The wealth of different people, rich and poor, old and young, men and women, clever and stupid, would make you wise quickly. They would hold before you like a book, the various seasons of the human heart, as it moves under law and grace, institutionalized and on fire.

As it is now, you hope for a war ministry,

outside a congregation. Your sailors may see a young chaplain enter the tight-knit fellowship aboard ship. You may expect them to feel that they have more of the spirit of fellowship in the face of peril and death than you do. You will be the novice; and they the veterans. Hence, you will feel tempted to act as their cook and charity lady, midwife and instructor, cleric and messenger, go-between and handy man. You will feel tempted to become cheap. It would be a case similar to the famous one of which the greatest historian of the Church wrote; It seemed as though Christ had fallen asleep on his ship. It is true, you will not be the only soul on board ship who keep alive the miraculous sense for the unity of all times. Others, on the seven seas of salt water, and I know one or two myself, make the ocean of eternity pulsate in the veins of their comrades, without a chaplain's dress. However, although you are not the only man in the crew to glorify God, you are responsible for these naive souls who look for the man in your office because they believe that God cannot leave them without witness of his eternity.

These good mariners do not wish to be pampered, They do not square your office with information please, current event, problems of spelling and how to make a will. All this is important. But, from my own experience, I can assure you that nothing

is more exasperating for men at the front as  
Fourth of July Speeches with a religious veneer.  
The greater the danger, the purer the gospel *should ring*.  
They want you to testify to God's Acts from the  
beginning of the world to the end of the world so  
that their day might shine as one star in the gal-  
axy of God's days with man. You must know of this  
galaxy and the names of old must not remain dead  
in your memory. You must study, and study hard  
so that the miracles and testimonies of old may  
reach your men through you. Do not quote a saint's  
or Jesus' own word. Preach their lives. But to do  
so, you must come to know them at close quarters.

God's faithfulness to Man made you a witness  
yourself. His faith appeared to you in two forms.  
It shaped your existence; it became the essence of  
your hopes. God in your existence and God as your  
essence, both, must not be kept apart. They should  
become united better and better until they become a  
rolling stream. You existed, for everything you  
ever were, as the fruit of a Christian environment.  
You grew up in a minister's home, went to college  
where the Earl of Dartmouth once hoped to pro-  
pagate the Gospel, and you were taught theology,  
in Divinity Schools.

Your environment is a perfect Christmas Carol.  
You received Christianity as a Christmas present from

everybody and everything around you. The Child  
adores and believes the Christmas miracle.

Christianity begins, as Christmas, in the Child.

But if it stays a family affair, it goes wrong.

Christianity is never familiar, O son of a minister;

Christianity is never worldly, O product of a

Christian world; Christianity is never theology, O  
graduate of a Divinity School.

The family is familiar to the child. But  
no marriage is possible without the fear of the  
Lord, <sup>without faith</sup> in something unfamiliar, ~~which is the~~ <sup>faith in the</sup>  
~~existence, the inheritance~~ <sup>the inheritance</sup> ~~of your parents, but~~  
<sup>is your inheritance from God.</sup>

The world is enlightened by the truth; but this  
truth must be found in the loneliness of your  
search, in abysses outside this so called Christian  
world. Theology explains everything in the Church;  
but Charity alone can do anything in the Church.

So, in this Christmas gift of your background,  
a mental challenge looms. Do not succumb to the  
brain corrosion of your generation who, having re-  
ceived too many gifts, no longer listen in fear, no  
longer penetrate towards the truth, no longer respect  
the relation between the inheritance from God, the  
search for new truth, and agape, their oneness in love.  
Do not destroy the triple light which illuminates the  
law and the institutions of Christendom. Remain a stu-

dent; become a student of the law and speak of the Law of the Lord day and night because you were planted, in your youth, at the waters of the Law's rivers.

You will succumb to the fads and fallacies of the physicists and the physicians, of the pacifists or the nationalists, of politics or of literature, in the days to come, unless you resuscitate in your mind the spirit which inspired the ministry, the Bible, the congregation, through the ages.

If you throw away this anchor of mental discipline which daily restores Christ as the center of history, you need not embark on your chaplainship. In the Navy, they have all the anchors they need, themselves, except this one.

On the other hand, you have tasted the essence of life everlasting. When the law, in the slums of Chicago, nearly crushed you, when the power to preach others into the Church was on the vanishing point, your cry was heard and you were encompassed by the Church as by a new womb. Miracles happened, boys became persons. It was given to you as it is to few people to breathe the rhythm of a life more powerful than any individual's, to recognize the Magnalia Dei from the books of old in God's present day power over human hearts. You saw with your own eyes what pente-

cost means, and the Holy Ghost ceased to be a mere quotation and fell upon many as a new symphony of praise in all tongues. And there was neither Greek nor Jew but all one, in Christ. And they became of one heart and one soul.

Every day seemed Sunday, with the griddle cakes of new miracles.

This was the essential experience which gave you power. It is one of the safest titles to your ordination. A congregation grew upon you in the flesh ~~before~~ <sup>at hand</sup> you, a congregation without a minister, before you were ordained as a minister without a congregation. You may hope that in times to come, the faith of a congregation will talk again through you.

Even so, this essential experience was lopsided. Essences are not meant to stay undiluted. Sectarianism is not the Spirit of God. Pentecost, to say this once more, did happen and does happen. But then, the apostles had to disperse. The idea that children can stay all their lives around the Christmas tree is not more impossible than the dream that pentecost messengers can stay around the fire. The enthusiasm of Pentecost and the miracle at Christmas both can be wasted and need not lead anywhere. They are elements ~~in~~ the incarnation, *very*.

The know<sup>T</sup> of history is tied through Easter alone. When you sunk into the depth of emptiness because your existence gave out, when you sank into the depth of despair because the enthusiasm fled, you tasted death. You were exposed to the dying of your certainties outside in the deterring slums of Chicago. And you cried out for a miracle and the law gave way to grace. You were exposed to the dying of your certainties inside of you, on the luring hills of Vermont. The dreams which you had built around the miracle, collapsed, and the state of grace was transformed into the revelation of the new law for your own life. And in this way, the old law and the new grace were appropriated by you under the Cross. The Cross opens the law to grace, and wraps the miracle into its own <sup>new</sup> law.

A rolling stream of fruitful seriousness unifies existence and essence when a man puts Easter between existence and essence--either crying out against the law, or bending to the incarnation of new law. Since you tasted of this stream, you will be able to decipher the mysteries of Pentecost, Christmas, Easter. The Cross is the power that plants a man in the midst of his congregation, for in the Cross, the tradition and the freedom of the children of God meet.

Meditate on this mysterious trinity, live it, re-live it. And you will defy barrenness and futility.



You will have strength to vivify liturgy and creed and institutions of the legitimate Church, and to sanctify the miracles and testimonies of now illegitimate life. Remain open to the miraculous sequence of Christmas, Pentecost, Easter, in your own life, when the law melts through the cry of a faithful servant into a miracle, and the miracles crystallize through the faith of a crying servant, into a new law. This, I think is what Cotton Mather called in his *Manuductio ad ministerium* 1726: to gospellize the commands.

Go, gospellize the Law, in you heart open to the mysteries of Christmas, Pentecost, Easter, obedient to the Father, open to the Spirit, and united to the Son, as it was in the beginning, now is, and ever shall be, world without end.