

The Way shows signs of a cult or sect

By Charles White

The imposition of the Neocatechumenal Way upon the Catholic Church in Guam is a root cause of the controversies recently reported here in this newspaper.

The Neocatechumenal Way, as many already know, is a movement within the Catholic Church that started in the '60s in Spain. It now has spread across the world and it is reported to have over a million members. It has received some level of approval from the last several popes, but not without also receiving some stern warnings from those same popes.

Why is the Neocatechumenal Way stirring discussions and controversy? In a nutshell, "The Way" exhibits many of the classic signs of a cult or sect, and it's this sectarianism that is the source of most of the problems. When I say "cult," please know that I am not comparing them to something as dangerous as Jim Jones' Peoples Temple, I'm just saying that they exhibit some alarming cultish tendencies.

Here are some examples of their sectarianism:

■ Adherents call their movement "the Way" and the definite article "the" seems to be no accident, because time after time, their pastoral practice suggests that they believe that there is no other way.

■ Members of the Neocatechumenal Way practice their faith in a way that largely separates them from their parishes. For example, they celebrate Mass away from the Church proper every Saturday night, instead of attending normal parish Masses. While they insist that these Masses are open to others, in practice, they are not. They are not even published in the parish bulletin. Even the high holy days of the Triduum — Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter — are celebrated apart from the parish.

■ There is a definite cult of personality surrounding the founder of the Neocatechumenal Way, Francisco "Kiko" Arguello. All

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music and art used in worship by the members here is composed by their founder, Kiko, as is much or most of the liturgical furnishings. Read more about that at http://thoughtfulcatholic.com/?page_id=824.

■ Neocatechumenal teaching is found in a 13-volume "Catechetical Director," but these documents have not been made public and are quite difficult to find. Most members of the Way have never seen them.

■ Some two years after joining the movement, members that aspire to move into a higher stage subject themselves to a "Scrutiny," where they are compelled to share their deepest crosses/secrets/sins publicly with their community. I highlight the dangers online at http://thoughtfulcatholic.com/?page_id=895. Some two years after that, members undergo another "Scrutiny," where they are subjected to a panel that goes over all their faults and sins. They are then compelled to do a "concrete act" to show their devotion to Christ, an act that involves giving away expensive jewelry, land, cars and other property.

Archbishop Anthony Apuron has mandated that every man seeking ordination in Guam must "walk for a time in the Way." He has made a few concessions to this mandate, but not without much struggle on the part of the men seeking them.

Local priests complain of favoritism on the part of the archbishop. Neocatechumenal priests and seminarians are treated much more favorably, it is said. When one priest, Father Paul Gofigan, consistently refused to allow the Way into his parish without some

concessions, he was uncanonically ousted from the leadership of his parish. That case is on appeal in Rome.

The archbishop himself is "walking in the Way." When one walks in the Way, one places oneself under the authority of the "catechists" that are assigned to one's Neocatechumenal community. These catechists, despite Neocatechumenal assertions to the contrary, are members of an international hierarchy that acts independently of the pastors and bishops.

To many of us, the archbishop seems to be under the control of the Neocatechumenal leadership, and he does not seem to be acting in the best interests of his diverse flock here. Some time ago — about two years ago, I believe — at the request of Neocatechumenal leadership, the archbishop proposed to convey the seminary property in Yona to a nonprofit organization controlled by the Way. This property is conservatively estimated to be worth \$35 million.

When his finance council and legal counsel objected, he fired the finance council members who objected and appointed new members who would agree. It is unknown if the archbishop has done anything since then to convey or cloud the title to this property.

There have been many occasions where the seminarians and priests from other countries, as well as at least one seminary professor, have exhibited an arrogance toward the indigenous culture of Guam, in particular, ridiculing the local practice of praying for the dead and mischaracterizing local beliefs about that prayer. An example of this can be found online at http://thoughtfulcatholic.com/?page_id=7587.

I have tried to lay out some of these problems in my blog, The Thoughtful Catholic, and I have gathered the links to these particular posts into one page at http://thoughtfulcatholic.com/?page_id=766.

Charles White is a resident of Tamuning.

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

Missing the typhoon days of my youth

I must say, after seeing pictures and videos of Tropical Storm Halong's effect on the island, I miss typhoon days in Guam. Perhaps it's because I am away from home. Perhaps I'm crazy! No, I'm not.

Let me be clear, I did not enjoy all the destruction, losses and financial burdens these storms left behind, though as a child and youth, my recollections of typhoons and tropical storms do not shine on the misfortunes and damages that occurred. Rather, I am drawn back to special moments that were created with my family.

What I loved about typhoon days in Guam, and maybe some of you can relate to this, is how we as a family were impelled to be together. Schools were shut down, many businesses were closed and we didn't have electricity. During these moments we were gathered together at home as a family. We had fun!

To be quite honest, I remember feeling like it was a holiday. I was happy.

My fondest memories during typhoon seasons happened at night underneath the starry sky or in a dark room lit with candles. These nights confined at home with the family were opportunities for us to simply talk to each other, tell scary stories, play board games and recall funny moments

about each other.

I loved how we didn't have to go anywhere or dress up nice to be entertained.

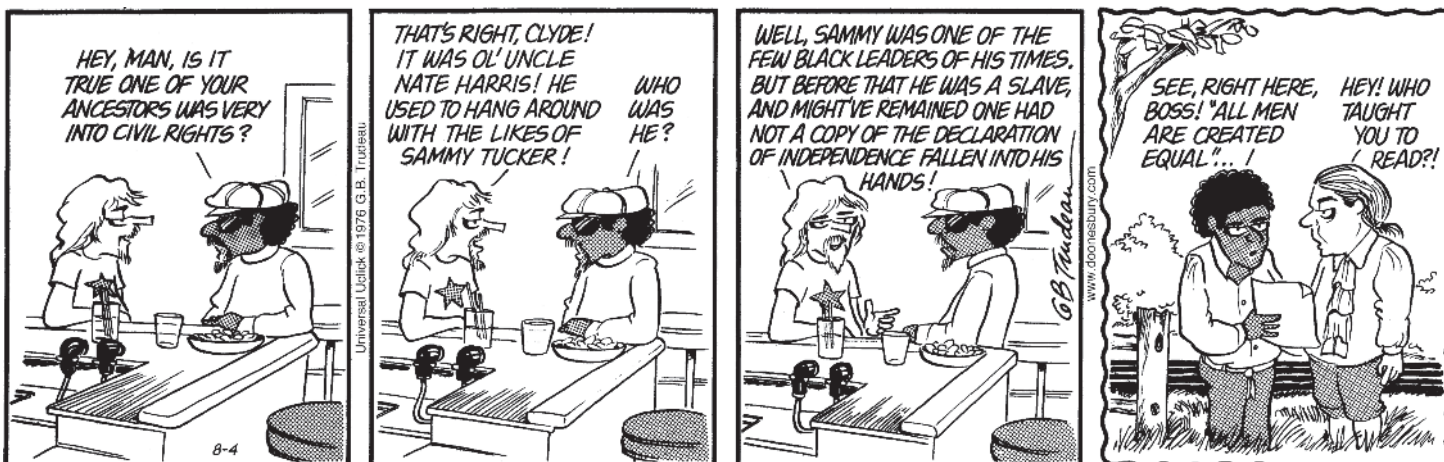
I loved how the weather was colder than usual and we could play and shower in the rain! I loved how many people and organizations from the island and the U.S. came to the rescue for many.

Our family was blessed countless times by the assistance and generosity of others.

I'm glad to hear of Tropical Storm Halong's departure. I'm thankful for all the unique, wonderful experiences I had growing up in Guam. Typhoon days certainly are some of them.

CHARMAINE WEST (SANTOS)
formerly of Yigo, Twin Falls, Idaho

CLASSIC DOONESBURY (1976)



BY G.B. TRUDEAU

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■ For more information, call Duane M. George at 479-0415.

Thought of the Day

"...Our Father which art in heaven, ... Thy kingdom come ..."

(Matthew 6:9b, 10a)

Do you really want his kingdom to come and for him to be the sovereign ruler of the Earth? Are you willing for God to rule your life?

Harvest Baptist Bible College

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