

# What Is A Bishop?

This week as hundreds of thousands pay jubilee tribute to Bishop James E. Kearney, the question is instinctively asked: "What is a bishop?"

Civic dignitaries and outstanding churchmen will honor the Rochester Bishop for qualities in his personality which have endeared him to the hearts of all who are privileged to know him. He himself, however, would be first to admit that the positions rendered him belong indeed "to the high priest" whom he holds as ambassador of Christ. Such were his words when he stepped from the train in 1937 to take up his Rochester bishopric.

The very ritual of the Church dramatizes the answer to the question: "What is a bishop?"

When Bishop Kearney celebrates solemn Mass at the cathedral altar, he stands surrounded by the priests and people of the Diocese. Every ceremony, every rite, points out the unmistakable fact that he is the "high priest" to whom all others in the Diocese must give assent.

This term "high priest" is a translation of an ancient, pagan Roman title—"pontifex"—the root of our English word "pontiff."

"Pontifex" originally meant a "bridge builder" and this graphically describes the role of the true high priest, the "high office" of every Catholic bishop.

TO UNDERSTAND this more clearly, St. Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews explains the need of mankind for a "bridge builder" to link heaven and earth.

Even the pagans knew this. They had many mistaken notions about religion but one truth sifted through all their errors. They were convinced that somewhere there was a place of happiness—call it Nirvana, Valhalla, Olympus, Abode of the gods.

These pagans had one disquieting thought. Is it possible for any of us to gain admittance to that heaven?

After centuries of debate their best philosophers could only acknowledge with a stoic realism that "gods are gods and men are men." That is the way things are. Nothing can be done to change this pattern. There is no passage from heaven to earth.

What the pagans could not know, what they could not foresee, is that God Himself would span that chasm by sending His own Divine Son to build a bridge to link God with man. As a matter of fact, Christ Himself is that bridge across the abyss which for centuries had separated heaven and earth with an impenetrable barrier.

All the greatness of the priesthood of Jesus is revealed in the words of the great Apostle St. Paul. Like unto men, Himself a man, Jesus has "pierced the heavens." He unites the two extremes, He is God and man, He belongs to two worlds, He is of heaven, and yet He treads the earth. He is the born intermediary between God and man. He is our "great high priest."

It is true there were priests before the coming of Christ. God Himself had authorized them on Sinai when He made His first pact with sinful men. But how different these ancient priests were from Christ. The priests of the Old Testament were sinners, just like other men. They had to beg forgiveness for their own sins before they could offer sacrifices for the sins of the people.

Not so for Christ. In the fullest sense He is the high priest men needed—one who was holy, innocent, without stain, distinguished from sinners, more exalted than the greatest angels.

The priests of the Old Law multiplied oblations. Over and over they burnt their impotent sacrifices which lacked power to obliterate sin.

Jesus, the great high priest, offered but one sacrifice. He had no need to sacrifice Himself many times. St. Thomas Aquinas later could say that "one drop alone" of Christ's precious Blood was more than adequate to redeem the whole world of all its sins.

Nor did the priests of the Old Law survive to perpetuate their priesthood. Death cut short their permanence and finally the Roman legions smashed their altar, destroyed their temple, and today there is neither priest nor altar nor sacrifice continuing the commands of Sinai.

Christ, in contrast, is immortal. He arose from death on Easter to live "always ready to make intercession for us." He possesses a priesthood which never wanes. He is perpetually in a position to be "the Way" by which men creep the tortuous road of Calvary to heaven's summit.

That is why all the Church's prayers are ended with the phrase "through Christ our Lord." He alone gives grace to us. He alone can make our feeble prayers rise to the throne of His heavenly Father.

AND THAT IS WHY He has established in His Church men taken from among men who have been ordained to make visible to men the enduring work of Christ our great high priest. Every Catholic priest shares in this "continuation of Christ" and every Catholic bishop in the fullest way perpetuates the words, the actions, the role of the Redeemer.

Such is the concept of a bishop in Catholic theology that his mitre and crozier, the pipe and dignity which surround him are but feeble attempts of poor sinners like us who strive for human words and gestures to those God has building a bridge across the centuries to draw us to the entrance of our Lord's Sacred Heart.

## Strange But True . . .

**ST. THOMAS MORE** WAS THE FIRST LAYMAN TO BECOME LORD CHANCELLOR OF ENGLAND.

THIS EXTRAORDINARY CREATION OF SHEET IRON AND WIRE IS CALLED THE "FACE OF CHRIST" BY EDGAR HIGGETT, POPAYAN (COLUMBIA) ARTIST.

Modern Art in sculpture and architecture is the work of CELLA DI BOSSIO, PAVIA, ITALY, constructed of fragments of broken shells.

Or Nets Cathedral in Italy is composed of white marble.



Majestic statue of Jesus Christ at Amiens Cathedral, France, shows our Saviour as the "great high priest" spoken of by St. Paul. Hand raised in blessing speaks pardon and grace for men. The book symbolizes truth revealed by our Lord. The priesthood of Christ is perpetuated in the Church through the office and work of the Bishop.

## My Divorced Wife Remarried Where Does That Leave Me?

By FATHER JOHN L. THOMAS, S.J., Assistant Professor of Sociology at St. Louis University

My wife and I were divorced six months ago after being married for nearly two years. She wasn't interested in having a family and insisted on holding her job after marriage. Our pastor tried to help but got nowhere. I've just heard that she has remarried. Where does that leave me? I'm 26 and have my whole life ahead of me. I've already discovered how difficult it is to live alone. What can I do now?

It won't be much consolation to you, Jack. I know, but every year around 800,000 men and women find themselves in your predicament because of divorce. According to reliable estimates, the majority of them eventually remarry, as your wife has already done.

If they were validly married in the first place, they are not capable of contracting another real marriage during the lifetime of their former partner, no matter what that partner may do. As you well know, their attempt to remarry again is not a marriage before God.

They are living together merely with state or civil permission. They cannot receive any saving grace through the sacrament. They are living at odds with God and with their own consciences.



AS A CATHOLIC, you recognize these facts, but as a normal adult male living in modern society, you are beginning to realize that you face tremendous difficulties. There are many reasons why this is true. First, you were trained and grew up with the expectation that marriage was to be your vocation in life. Your outlook, habits, education and work were more or less closely related to this expectation.

Second, although your marriage was apparently not a happy one, you did acquire some of the habits and experiences normally associated with married life. This implies that you now probably have a better understanding of what a successful marriage could mean in your life.

Third, most of the strictly social activities in modern adult society are organized around and on the basis of the couple or family. This means that you will find it difficult to participate in them as a single person.

Fourth, frequent association between a man and woman of marriageable age easily leads to mutual attraction and love. As a result, you cannot safely trust yourself to go on dates as an unmarried man could. You may argue that there's nothing wrong in dating a girl only once, but the number of available respectable girls is limited, and you would soon find you were dating the same girl more frequently.

You have the firm conviction that you are living in friendship with God and according to His Law. Second, you need divine help. God offers this to you through prayer and the sacraments. You would be foolish if you thought you could handle this problem alone. Third, you must use common sense in organizing your life.

This means that you will be honest with yourself in avoiding company-keeping with the opposite sex. You will be tempted to fool yourself here, but look at the experience of others.

It also means that you must find some activities which will be worthwhile enough to take up your time, energy, and interest. Some men find this in additional schooling, or by engaging in charitable and religious activities which are sufficiently important to require their best effort. There is generally work of such nature to be done if one has an eye for it.

## JOSEPH BREIG Her Baby Died Unbaptized

A mother in Baltimore has asked me to write something to help her bear the sorrow of having lost a baby before he was baptized.

She began by thanking me as have other mothers. For the article about the Pope and Red Skelton, with its comfort for those whose baptized children have died.

Then she added: "You have lost two children but you have the wonderful consolation of knowing your babies are in Heaven. Can you imagine how you would have felt if one of them had died without baptism?"

I can more than imagine it. I have good reason to hope that our children were alive when baptized. But I have had to live with the possibility that they weren't. Therefore I know the hurt in the heart of this mother.

"I AM HEARTBROKEN about it," she says. "I am hoping you can write me a few words of comfort in an article about babies dying without baptism. There must be many other mothers who have had this same experience and feel as I do."

There are millions of such mothers, and there is indeed effort for them in the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas.

We must begin by grasping firmly the difference between the natural and the supernatural, between human happiness, and the happiness of God.

Human happiness properly belongs to human nature as such. Supernatural happiness—the sharing in the divine happiness of the Blessed Trinity—does not. This is an inexpressible gift which God gives out of His overflowing goodness.

WE CANNOT IMAGINE this divine happiness. If somebody died and came back to try to tell us about it, he could not—no more than we can describe a Beethoven symphony to one who has never heard sound.

Even St. Paul could not tell us about it. He could only say: "Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the mind of man what God has prepared for those who love Him."

This supernatural happiness is absolutely above and beyond anything of which we can conceive in any way. We would not suspect that God would so frustrate it, had He not willed so.

But there is another happiness, human happiness. And this is a great happiness, even though it is infinitely less than the happiness of God.

ST. THOMAS TEACHES that unbaptized infants suffer nothing exterior or interior, neither pain nor sorrow nor sadness nor regret nor anything of the kind.

Therefore, if I understand St. Thomas rightly, infants who die without baptism live forever in an unalloyed natural human happiness. Perhaps God does something further for them; we do not know. But they are happy.

They are happy with a great human happiness. St. Thomas says they are separated from God in the sense of not participating in God's own glory, of which they know nothing, but in another sense they are not separated from Him, because they participate in natural good which comes from and speaks of Him.

I THINK WE MIGHT put it this way: suppose that I lived forever on earth knowing nothing of the possibility of a human being sharing God's own happiness. Knowing only human reason told me about God, but free from pain and sorrow; free above all from sin or guilt; free to be as happy as human nature in itself is capable of being.

To understand how much happiness it would be, we would need to realize, far better than we do, how magnificent human nature is; what a noble being is a man or woman who knows no sin.

## FATHER SHEERIN Red Moon

By FATHER JOHN B. SHEERIN, C.S.P. (Written for N.C.W.C. NEWS SERVICE)

What does the "Red moon" mean? We would have expected that the launching of a satellite into the neighborhood of the moon would be a happy occasion. Unfortunately, it was a sad day for the civilized world when that news was released.

For the conquest of outer space by the Russians smacks more of a military victory than of a scientific triumph. The Vatican City weekly newspaper looked upon the event with a little less disfavor than did the American press and yet there was a pessimistic note in its comment.

It acknowledged the conquest of the outer atmosphere as a great scientific achievement but feared it would lead to new forms of world conquest. "Only the naive can think that the satellite is a peaceful instrument designed only for scientific research," the paper did not cast suspicion on Russia's ambitions but expressed "our pessimism in man who has now one more tremendous and terrifying toy to play with as he pleases."

THE "RED MOON" has of course great propaganda value as well as military potential. The Russians have beaten the Americans at their own game technology. The launching of the "moon" will make a strong impression on those Asiatic nations who stand in awe of scientific progress. Perhaps they will be tempted to feel a bit safer in the Soviet camp.

The "moon" will also tend to reinstate the Soviets in the eyes of those millions of men who

## Making Marriage Click

### Quarreling, Not The Way To Solve Disagreements

By MSGR. IRVING A. DE BLANC (Director, Family Life Bureau, N.C.W.C.)

Robert Fontaine, the playwright, obviously believes that quarreling, regardless of age, married folk are the source of constant mutual surprise, excitement, and mystery.

He tells the somewhat amusing story of the tottering old couple in long wedlock, each for sixty years. One of their children happens to be present on the scene during one of their occasional fits. The discussion concerned a recent incident which had occurred twenty-five years before.

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THE CATHOLIC Courier Journal THE ROCHESTER DIOCESE

Vol. 68, No. 4 Friday, October 25, 1957

MOST REVEREND JAMES EDWARD KEARNEY, D.D., President

Published every Friday by the Rochester Catholic Press Association. MAIN OFFICE: 31 Secor St.—Rochester 4-6210—Rochester 4, N. Y. ALBANY OFFICE: 312 Albany Bldg.—Phone 3-5688 or 3-3423. Katered an second class under title of News Office at Rochester, N. Y. As required under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Single copy 10c; 1 year subscription in U. S., \$4.00. Canada, \$8.00. Foreign, \$12.00.

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