

Ecumenical Encounters

"We do not wish to put anybody in history on trial; we shall not seek to establish who was right and who was wrong. Responsibility is divided. We only want to say: Let us come together, let us make an end of our divisions."

—Pope John XXIII

Thirty-two Episcopalian clergymen took a close look at Roman Catholic churches and worship this week.

They visited St. Louis Church in Pittsford, St. Thomas More Church in Brighton and St. Ambrose Church in Irondequoit to see how architects adapted contemporary designs to serve an ancient faith.

The tour actually started about three months ago when I was asked to speak to a clergy group about the Vatican Council. During a conversation following the talk, several expressed the wish to see some of the Rochester-area modern-style Catholic parish churches.

The May 20th date was set and the number registered to make the tour gained from an original 12 to 25 and finally reached the 32 figure — largest in the series of once-a-month meetings of priests of the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester.

Making the three hour tour with his clergy was newly consecrated Bishop George W. Barrett — an honor I hadn't expected.

The tour concluded with noon-time Mass at Corpus Christi Church celebrated by Monsignor John E. Maney who then joined the group for lunch at the Convent Retreat House and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

During the visit to St. Thomas More Church, the clergy were able to witness children at prayer during the parish Forty Hours Devotion. At the Mass at Corpus Christi Church, almost all the lay people received Holy Communion. Many were also lined up waiting their turn for Confession.

Many of the Episcopal priests later commented with admiration on this during-the-week devotion of Catholic people for the Mass and the sacraments. They also noted the obvious emphasis our churches put on the altar — the dominant focus of attention in all churches they visited. They did wonder why the Catholic liturgical movement had such little effect on locating the baptistry so an entire congregation could see and take part in a baptism ceremony.

Many European churches and some U.S. churches have actually been designed to permit this in recent years.

Another "ecumenical encounter" at the local level also deserves mention.

Nearly one hundred laymen and women, members of eight study groups which meet once a month, climaxed their year's study program at a Mass and supper. Speaking at the supper was Rev. Donald Sliemers, pastor of the Episcopal Church of All Saints in Irondequoit. He gave "their" hopes of what "we" will do as a result of the Vatican Council.

He listed first those areas where Non-Catholics are most frequently puzzled by the Church — in many cases due, admittedly, to misunderstanding — signs at the church door, "in-churching" with bars labels all who are members of other religious denominations.

Most of his talk, however, stressed what he termed the "strengths" of the Catholic Church — factors which Christians in other groups admire.

These included the "constant witness, century after century" to the "centrality of the Eucharist" — that Sunday after Sunday, day after day, Catholics, no matter what the obstacles, fulfill the command of Christ to "do this in memory of Me."

He also cited the "catholic" aspect of the Church which keeps it independent of the state rather than becoming comfortably identified with it as is the case with many other religious denominations. He also singled out for praise the courageous loyalty to the faith of Catholic clergy and laity in the face of Communist efforts to get them to break from the Vatican.

These two ecumenical episodes do not mean doctrinal chasms of four centuries duration will melt away. But they do give evidence to a statement of Vatican Council expert Monsignor Joseph C. Fenton when he visited Rochester earlier this month — Pope John has opened doors for people of different denominations to listen to one another and to realize with deeper awareness that sincerity in one's faith is not weakness — rather it is strengthened — in learning that others are sincere in theirs.

—Father Henry Atwell

Popes Aid World To Know Church

Boston—(RNS)—A noted Jesuit educator said here that the world has become aware of the international character of the Roman Catholic Church since Pope John called the Second Vatican Council "to impress upon it that every man is a brother of every other man."

Father Robert I. Gannon, S.J., former president of Fordham University, addressed the opening session of the annual bi-diocesan congress of the Boston League of Catholic Women.

"POPE JOHN moved the world when he called the Council," said Father Gannon, adding that the world now takes internationalism seriously. "The narrow nationalism that once tormented a world-wide Church has changed."

Delegates were told that good public relations are necessary . . . and by public relations I mean the act of making people like you, your product, your Church. You do not belong to the Church. You are the Church.

Father Gannon said the personalities of the last three Popes — Pius XII, John XXIII and Pope Paul VI — have been the most significant in the Vatican.



School Addition, Fallout Shelter to be Blessed

NEW SIX-ROOM school addition and combination fallout shelter-recreation facilities at St. Plus X Parish will be blessed Sunday, May 26 by Auxiliary Bishop Casey following 4 p.m. Confirmation rites. Stephen Hoffman and Paul Hoffmaster are shown above filling water storage cans for use in the fallout shelter. Accompanying photos show other views of the facilities.



Mrs. Kenneth Speller, president of the Rosary Guild, is shown with kitchen facilities in the fallout shelter-recreation facilities.

Shrine to Our Lady Queen of Peace is located in the hallway of the fallout shelter.

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Dogs, Prods Deployed

New York — (RNS) — The Catholic Interracial Council of New York issued a statement of protest here against the treatment of Negroes during the anti-segregation demonstrations in Birmingham, Ala.

Defending the non-violent tactics employed by integrationists, the CIC said: "Inevitably human conscience must speak out in protest."

"We deplore the barbaric measures taken by police action in Birmingham," the statement said. "The spectacle of police dogs lunging at American citizens is one that will not soon be erased from the minds of freedom-loving people the world over."

The CIC also condemned the use of the fire hoses and electric cattle prods against integrationists as "an insult and degradation to the dignity of our Negro brothers."

COURIER-JOURNAL
Friday, May 24, 1963

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