



Liturgy and Life

Monsignor William Busch, widely respected as the "proto-evangelist of the U.S. Liturgical Movement," was a close collaborator with the Benedictine, Fathers Virgil Michel and Michael Ducey in launching the "Orate Fratres" magazine and inaugurating the U.S. Liturgical Weeks. A longtime professor of history at St. Paul's Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., Msgr. Busch translated many liturgical texts and was the author of the widely read book "The Mass-Drama." Advocating a closer relation of popular devotions and the liturgy, he composed prayers for the "Way of the Cross" based upon the missal and Breviary texts. The 83-year-old priest is now in residence at St. Paul's Seminary. He is depicted here with the seminary chapel in the background.

Is Everything Always Better?

George Orwell in his novel 1984 tells how the telecreens daily report "statistics proving that people today had more food, more clothes, better houses, better recreation — that they lived longer, worked shorter hours, were bigger, healthier, stronger, happier, more intelligent, better educated, than the people of fifty years ago."

The reality, however, according to Orwell, was "decaying, dingy cities, where underfed people shuffled to and fro in leaky shoes, in patched-up nineteenth century houses that smelt always of cabbage and bad lavatories."

To some extent, Orwell's 1984 is simply the story of every-year written in epic proportions.

Most organizations tend to revel in statistics of triumph and are reluctant to admit to any shadows on the scene.

The Vatican Council may turn out to be, for a sizeable number of Catholics, simply a paper tiger and its decrees but paper victories for ivory-tower liberals.

A simple test can reveal just how effective the Vatican Council has been. Except for the ritual changes and the switch from Latin to English, how is your parish — or your own spiritual life — any different than it was before the Council?

If the parish bulletin, the Sunday sermon, the meetings of the parish societies are no different than they were five years ago, then how can we honestly claim the Council was a success? It's purpose, said Pope John, was "pastoral" but have the deliberations of 2500 bishops had any "pastoral" effect at the local level?

One Rochester pastor in the early days of the Council said it would take 200 years to put it into effect. Young priests enjoyed quoting him as an example of what Pope John once termed "prophecy of doom." However pessimistic his prediction seemed three years ago, subsequent reaction to the Council's directives has proved him to be quite a realist.

To admit our shortcomings in fulfilling the Council's hopes is not necessarily to admit to failure. "Instant" success could be but superficial anyway and perhaps in the long run jeopardize the trust the Council — and the Holy Spirit — has given to the Church for the final decades of the twentieth century.

The present time, according to Pope Paul in specifying January to June of this year as a time of special Jubilee, is a time to study, to ponder and to apply the decisions enacted by the Pope and the world's Catholic bishops at the Council.

Our statistics of increased Communion, successful fund campaigns, a steadily growing Catholic population are not necessarily the proof of actual victories for the faith. Such statistics could simply be a reflection of an over-all population increase and the current affluence of the nation's economic condition.

The most embarrassing test of all is to look into our own personal lives to see if there has been honest progress there. Both Pope John and Pope Paul have repeatedly insisted that the Church or its parishes cannot be renewed unless its members are themselves first renewed in their own attitude and activities.

—Father Henry Atwell

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Priests 'No Strangers' To World They Seek To Serve

By FATHER JOHN P. DONNELLY

Vatican City — (NC) — Central to the theme of the Vatican Council's decree on the priesthood is an attempt to coordinate a priest's ministry and his personal life.

As the Council states flatly: "Priests who perform their duties sincerely and indefatigably in the spirit of Christ arrive at holiness by that very fact."

Realizing this coordination, they are then prepared, the Council states, to fulfill their essential role in the modern world. They are not to be separated from the people — God or from any person, but they are to be totally dedicated to the work for which the Lord has chosen them.

"They cannot be ministers of Christ unless they be witnesses and dispensers of a life other than the earthly life. But they cannot be of service to men if they remain strangers to the life and conditions of men. Their ministry itself by a special title forbids that they be conformed to this world; yet, at the same time, it requires that they live in this world among men."

The carefully balanced decree on the "Ministry and Life of Priests," the last schema debated in the Council, was among four promulgated by Pope Paul VI during public ceremonies on the eve of the Council's closing.

Its conciliar teaching provides for an updated Church, a synthesis of two historical tendencies of thinking both of which have led in the past to extremes. One was the "heresy of action," roundly condemned by Pope Pius XII; the other, often repeated, has attempted to frame the spirituality of even parish priests in terms of monastic piety and seclusion.

"Involved and constrained by so many obligations of their office," the decree states, all priests, but especially those devoted to the care of souls, "certainly have reason to wonder how they can coordinate and balance their interior life with feverish outward activity."

"Neither the mere external performance of the works of the ministry nor an exclusive engagement in pious devotions — although both are very helpful — can bring about this necessary coordination. Priests can arrive at it only by following the example of Christ Our Lord in their ministry. His food was to follow the will of Him who had sent Him to accomplish His work."

Priests then can achieve a unity between their spiritual lives and their work by "joining themselves with Christ" as they fulfill the role of the Good Shepherd in the very exercise of their pastoral charity they will discover a bond of priestly perfection which draws their life and activity to unity and coordination.

At the "root and center" of this pastoral charity, and at the center of the priest's whole life, is the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

The yardstick for a priest's success in a concrete way is whether or not his endeavors "compare with the goals of the Gospel mission of the Church. Fidelity to Christ cannot be separated from faithfulness to His Church. Pastoral charity requires that priests avoid operating in a vacuum and that they work in a strong bond of union with their bishops and brother priests."

The well-organized document is divided into two main sections: the first discussing the priestly ministry in the modern world, and secondly, his life and the spiritual, intellectual and physical aids to its fulfillment.

His threefold function as teacher, sanctifier and ruler in the Church as a co-worker with his bishop are expanded in one section of the first part; his relationship with his bishop, fellow priests and laity in another.

The primary duty of a priest is that of "proclaiming the Gospel of God to all men."

"To all men, therefore, priests are debtors so that, the truth of the Gospel which they have may be given to others.

And so — whether by entering into profitable dialogue they bring people to worship God, whether by openly preaching they proclaim the mystery of Christ, or whether in the light of Christ they treat contemporary problems — they are relying not on their own wisdom, for it is the word of Christ they teach, and it is to conversion and holiness they exhort all men.

"But priestly preaching is often very difficult in the circumstances of the modern world. In order that it might move men's minds more effectively, the words of God ought not be explained in a general and abstract way, but rather by applying the lasting truth of the Gospel to particular circumstances of life."

The office of preaching should be directed to both the Christian and the non-Christian community, to bring all to salvation. "In the Christian community, especially among those who seem to understand and believe little of what they practice, preaching the word is needed for the very ministering of the sacraments of faith — faith which is born and nourished by the word. This is especially true of the Liturgy of the Word in the celebration of the Mass . . . which priests themselves extend throughout the day by their recitation of the Divine Office."

In their exercise of authority, priests share in the authority of Christ, the decree states, and in the name of the bishop they "gather the family of God together as a brotherhood enlivened by one spirit." This exercise is to be characterized by "exceptional kindness" and priests are expected to act toward men "not as seeking to impose the demands of Christian doctrine and life. They should teach them and admonish them as beloved sons."

The section ends with particular suggestions for the fulfillment of the priestly ministry:

"Ceremonies, however beautiful, or associations however flourishing, will be of little value if they are not directed toward the spiritual growth of men in Christian maturity." And although a priest's obligation extends to all men, special attention must be given to the poor and weak, to the youth, to married couples and parents, and to the spiritual formation of Religious men and women who work in their parishes. Above all, they must be "sollicitous for the sick and dying, visiting them and strengthening them in the Lord."

They are "never to put themselves at the service of some human faction or ideology, but as heralds of the Gospel and shepherds of the Church they are to spend themselves for the spiritual growth of the Body of Christ."

Discussing priests' relationships with others, the Council asks bishops to "regard priests as their brothers and friends and be concerned as far as they are able for their material and especially for their spiritual wellbeing. For, above all, bishops bear the heavy responsibility for the sanctity of their priests."

"They should gladly listen to their priests, indeed, consult

them and engage in dialogue with them on those matters which concern the necessities of the pastoral work and welfare of the diocese. In order to put this into effect, there should be established, in a manner suited to today's conditions and necessities, and with structures and norms to be determined by law, a body or senate of priests . . . This representative body by its advice will be able to give the bishop effective assistance in the administration of the diocese."

Priests, on the other hand, must "stand by their bishops in sincere charity and obedience . . . based on the very sharing of the episcopal ministry." This union is all the more necessary in the modern world, the decree states, since "apostolic undertakings must necessarily not only take on many forms but frequently extend even beyond the boundaries of one parish or diocese."

All priests in a diocese "form one priesthood under their own bishop" whether they engage in parochial or extra-parochial ministry, whether they are devoted to scientific research or teaching, "or whether in manual labor they share in the lot of the workers themselves."

This last reference to "priest-worker" experiments, called off in 1959 by Pope John, were given the green light only in the final weeks of the Council, is qualified by the words: "if there is need for this and if competent authority approves."

The perennial problem of the divergence in outlook between youth and age among parish priests is given thorough treatment. "Older priests should receive younger priests as true brothers and help them in their first undertakings and priestly duties . . . They should likewise endeavor to understand the mentality of younger priests, even though it be different from their own, and follow their projects with good will."

By the same token, young priests should respect the age and experience of their seniors; they should seek their advice and willingly cooperate with them in everything that pertains to the care of souls."

Among priests, a spirit of hospitality and kindness should prevail, the decree says, and they should "share their goods in common." Special solicitude is demanded for fellow priests who are "sick, afflicted, those overburdened with work, lonely, those exiled from their homeland, and those who suffer persecution."

The Council asks that priests try to take their recreation together as much as possible and strive for some kind of common life depending on the circumstances of their ministry. A special word of encouragement is given to priestly associations which, "recognized by competent ecclesiastical authority, encourage priestly holiness by the use of an approved rule of life and fraternal aid."

In a particular way they are obliged to support fellow priests who have fallen away or become involved in major difficulties.

In relation to the laity, priests are, in the words of the document, "brothers." They are required to work with

laymen and sincerely acknowledge and promote the "dignity of the laity and the part proper to them in the mission of the Church. And they should hold in high honor that just freedom which is due to everyone in the Earthly City."

Aside from recognizing and paying attention to the laity's special competence and experience, they must also "look for and foster the various humble and exalted charisms of the laity."

In recognizing and fostering the freedom and responsibility of the laity, "it is their task to reconcile differences of mentality in such a way that no one need feel himself a stranger in the community of the faithful."

The final section of the first part of the decree concerns the vocation to the priesthood and a more equitable distribution of personnel throughout the Universal Church.

A vocation "is never to be expected as something which in an extraordinary manner will be heard by the ears of the future priest. It is rather to be known and understood in the manner in which the will of God is daily made known to prudent Christians."

To provide better for the Church's needs, the decree recommends that "priests of dioceses rich in vocations should show themselves willing and ready, with permission of their Ordinaries, to volunteer for work in other regions, missions and endeavors which are poor in numbers of clergy. Frequentation (Church laws providing for a priest's permanence in a particular diocese) should be so revised that, while this ancient institution still remains intact, they will correspond to today's pastoral needs."

International seminaries and "personal dioceses or prelatures," determined by the particular needs of persons rather than the territories in which they live, are also recommended.

The second part of the decree centers on the priest's spiritual life. "By the sacred actions which are theirs each day, — as well as by their entire ministry which they share with the bishop and their fellow priests, they are directed to perfection in their lives . . . even though divine grace could use unworthy ministers to effect the work of salvation; yet for the most part God chooses, to show forth His wonders, those who are more open to the power and direction of the Holy Spirit."

Reflecting Pope Paul's encyclical Mysterium Fidei, which was published just before the final session of the Council began, the document urges priests daily to "celebrate Mass" — "their greatest task" — which, even if a number of the faithful cannot be present, "is still an act of Christ and of the Church."

They are also to make themselves available to hear confessions "whenever the sacrament is reasonably sought by the faithful."

The special requirements of all priestly life, diocesan as well as religious, are the virtues of poverty, chastity and obedience. Although the decree recognizes that celibacy is not required by the nature of the priesthood, and though it recognizes and leaves unchanged the practice in the Eastern Catholic Church of a married clergy, still it "approves and confirms" that law for the Western Church.

"Insofar as perfect continence is thought by many men to be impossible in our times, to that extent priests should all the more humbly and steadfastly pray with the Church for the grace of fidelity which is never denied those who seek it, and use all supernatural and natural aids available."

Thus consecrated to Christ, priests "adhere to Him with an undivided heart, and they dedicate themselves more freely in Him and through Him to the service of God and men, and they more expeditiously minister to His kingdom and the work of heavenly regeneration, and thus they are apt to accept, in a broad sense,

paternity in Christ . . . They give, moreover, a living sign of the world to come by a faith and charity already made present, in which the children of the resurrection neither marry nor take wives."

In the spirit of poverty, according to the decree, "those goods which priests and bishops receive for the exercise of their ecclesiastical office should be used for the adequate support and fulfillment of their office and status. That which is in excess they should be willing to set aside for the good of the Church or for works of charity. Thus they are not to seek ecclesiastical offices or the benefits of it for the increase of their own family wealth. They should avoid everything which in any way could turn the poor away."

As an example of this latter, the decree asks them to "arrange their homes so that they might appear approachable to anyone, least anyone, even the most humble, fear to visit them."

The aids for developing the priest's spiritual life are divided into spiritual, intellectual and physical.

The spiritual aids include especially the reading of Scripture and the sacrifice of the Mass, as well as confession, spiritual reading and devotion to Mary. Great value must also be attached to daily visits to the Blessed Sacrament, retreats and a personal spiritual director.

The pursuit of knowledge, particularly of theology, is a continuous necessity both for a priest's own intellectual maturity and for the needs of those to whom he teaches the word of God. "In order, moreover, that they may give apt answers to questions posed by men of this age, it is necessary for priests to know well the doctrines of the magisterium and the councils, and documents of the Roman pontiffs, and to consult the best of prudent writers of theological science."

The spirit of poverty is essential to priests' spiritual development, but still the council insists on their right to "reasonable remuneration." Insofar as this would not be provided otherwise, the "faithful themselves — that is, those on behalf of whom the priest labors — are truly obliged to see to it that they can provide what help is necessary for the honorable and worthy life of the priests."

Bishops are urged to establish norms for suitable support of those who perform special functions outside normal parish work. The remuneration should be "fundamentally the same for all in the same circumstances," and it should equip priests not only to be able to provide honorably for themselves, but to be able to give some means of "helping" the needy.

"Furthermore, this remuneration should be such that it will permit priests each year to take suitable and sufficient vacation, something which indeed bishops should see that their priests are able to have . . ."

"It is supremely fitting, at least in regions where the support of the clergy completely or largely depends on the offerings of the faithful, that their offerings for this purpose be collected by a particular diocesan institution, which the bishop administers with the help of priests and, when necessary, laymen who are expert in financial matters."

Further recommendations urge wealthier dioceses to help the poorer, and certain provisions for priests' social security, health insurance, sickness and retirement benefits.

Thus the decree observes that priests can be "freed from an anxious concern for their own future so that they can cultivate evangelical poverty more readily and give themselves fully to the salvation of souls."

In conclusion, the document thanks all priests for their past contribution in sowing the seed of the Gospel "which now bears fruit in many places, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, who fills the whole earth, and who has stirred up a missionary spirit in the hearts of many priests and faithful."

You can continue to help Bishop Kearney in his work for immortal souls.



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Poland, An Equilibrium of Irreconcilable Forces

by GARY MacEOIN

Austria — "We are enjoying in Poland a situation of perfect equilibrium of mutually irreconcilable forces, an equilibrium that has every indication of continuing indefinitely. It could hardly happen anywhere else, but for us it is little less abnormal than most of our historical experience."

Such is the summing-up of a distinguished Polish writer whom I had the pleasure of meeting again, after several years, during a quick trip through Central Europe. For obvious reasons, I may not identify him.

The irreconcilable forces are, of course, the Catholic Church, which enjoys the loyal support of 80 per cent of Poles, and the Communist Party, which can hardly count on one in five but which is in Poland to stay for as long as the world balance of terror continues.

The Communists have worked hard to laicize the society and to promote atheism at a high cultural level. The most noticeable effect of their efforts, however, is an increase in religious practice. Attendance at Mass and reception of the sacraments is better than before the war, comparing favorably with percentages in Cath-

olic countries of non-Communist Europe.

Ninety per cent of the children enrolled in primary and secondary schools attend religious instruction in the parishes. Their school programs include Communist propaganda, but most of the teachers are Catholics and go through the motions of presenting the courses in such a way as to negate their purpose.

Poland is this year about to celebrate the 1,000-year anniversary of events which marked both the introduction of Christianity and the birth of the nation, with the ceremonies focused on the famous pilgrimage center of Our Lady of Czestochowa. Nothing could illustrate better the complicated political and social pressures with which the Church and the Communist regime live.

The Polish invitations, in Rome for the Council, issued invitations to the bishops of other countries, including Germany, to participate in the ceremonies. Soundings were also made regarding a possible visit of the Pope to Czestochowa.

The initiative offered definite benefits to the regime. The presence in Poland of delegations of Catholic bishops from around the world would give it a certain stamp of approval. In particular, an ac-

ceptance by the German bishops would help the Polish claim that its western frontier is as fixed on the Oder-Neisse line at the end of hostilities in 1945, are definitive.

The price might, nevertheless, be too high. The presence of so many bishops, especially if they included the Pope, would become a demonstration to the world of the intensity of the faith of Poland. That would not only embarrass the regime vis-a-vis the other Communist states but would give the Polish hierarchy new leverage in the eternal jockeying for advantage.

The result has been the widely publicized attacks by the regime on the bishops, and particularly on Cardinal Wyszynski, for meddling in politics. The regime has certainly no intention of stopping the celebrations, or even denying visas to visiting bishops. But it wants to establish the principle that the bishops should not take initiatives without its prior approval. For Communist regimes, no principle is more basic. The individual or groups has no rights. All they enjoy are privileges, and these are granted and withdrawn by the state in its absolute discretion.

The issue of rights is a sore point with

some influential Catholics, and particularly with the Cardinal himself. He thinks that the Church must show its strength, from time to time, as a reminder that the Communist regime is not the only power in the land.

A growing body of Catholic opinion doubts the wisdom of such gestures. This is particularly true of the important group of lay intellectuals who form the organization known as Znaki (meaning "signs").

The group maintains a Catholic presence in the parliament, where it is represented by 5 deputies. It controls Poland's most important Catholic publishing house. The books division translates into Polish the leading Catholic writers of both East and West. The periodicals division produces a philosophic magazine read by clergy and laity and influential even in Marxist cultural circles.

The Znaki people feel that Catholics must recognize the problem of their opponents. The Communists know that they lack popular support, and they must consequently react violently to any such public challenge. It is accordingly important to find face-saving ways of enlarging the area within which the Church can function.

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