

'That Christ be Loved'

A new bishop in a diocese is something like a new baby in a family. There is no doubt about the child being loved; the problem is: what kind of a child will he be?

Your side of the installation is beyond question. You accept me because of your faith in the Church. But the kind of bishop I will be, depends on something entirely different, namely, how much do I love the Lord. Let us go back to the first Christian scene when authority was given and study the conditions of its bestowal.

A few years ago, about four o'clock in the morning, I visited that point on the Sea of Galilee where Our Blessed Lord appeared to His disciples the Sunday after Easter. I sat alongside two rocks in between which was a fire. Over the fire some fish were cooking and some loaves of bread. About a hundred yards out from the shore were seven fishermen in a boat, casting their nets into the sea.

I gave myself to wondering why Our Blessed Lord Who called His Apostles to be fishers of men, should have on this occasion spoken to Peter about lambs and sheep. It did not seem natural to talk about shepherding alongside the sea. After an hour more of meditation, I gave up looking for the answer, when a shepherd came to me and placed in my hands a two-day old lamb. I asked where he came from. He said: "This field behind you." This explained the Easter scene. There were evidently lambs along the seashore on that very morning mentioned in the Gospel.

In the original scene, Peter, Andrew, James, John, Nathaniel and two other disciples were throwing their nets into the sea. Our Lord stood on the shore preparing bread and fish for His disciples. When Simon Peter swam impetuously to shore, he saw Our Blessed Lord with His Scars blazing like stars in His Risen Body. The Lord had already made Peter the Rock of the Church, but now authority was to be conferred upon him. But on what condition? Our Lord did not ask Peter: "Do you fear Me?" nor "Do you admire Me?" nor "Do others stand in dread of you?" Our Lord asked only one question: "Do you love Me?" and He asked it not once, but three times. Knowing the human weakness of His apostle, He called him not by the Divine name of Rock, but the human, weak name of Simon.

The first question of Our Blessed Lord was: "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" It could be that Our Blessed Lord was here, referring to the other disciples, recalling Peter's boast that though others might fall, he would not. But it may also be that Our Lord was here changing His figure from fish to lambs because Peter whom He called away from the nets and boats, had gone back to them again. So Our Lord is saying, "You left all and followed Me, but now you are back at your old life again, and you have even formed a new fishing company. You are a natural leader, six others have followed you. Are you going to abandon Me? Are you pulling out of the adventure? Have you put your hand to the plow and are looking back? Do you love Me more than these? When Peter said: "Lord, I love You," then Our Blessed Lord said: "Feed My lambs."

"If you love Me, then care for the children, the teen-agers, the young men and women, the new converts and the humble. Remember, too, they are not yours, but Mine." It brought Peter back to the time when Our Lord gathered the children around Him and said that un-

This is the text of Bishop Sheen's sermon at his installation Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral Thursday, Dec. 15.



'I hope you will love me as I love you.'



'Pray for me. Write to me.'

less you become like a child, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now we come to administration and government in authority, but on what condition? The second time, the Lord asks: "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" When Peter answered in the affirmative, Our Lord said: "Look after My sheep." "If you love Me, then rule my priests, My religious, My people of God. If any one of them is lost, leave the ninety-nine and go after it. Keep them from wolves, preserve them from wirelings, govern them, administer them but with a voice which the sheep will know as their own and follow you into the sheepfold. Do not ask them to go where you do not go. And remember they are MY sheep, not yours."

The third time Our Blessed Lord asked: "Do you love Me?" Peter appealing to the Divine Mind to read his heart, answered: "Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Our Lord then gave the third command: "Feed My sheep." "I told you before to rule, to govern them, but remember that you are not just an administrator. The sheep are not only to be looked after: they are to be fed. Fed on the Bread of Life. Fed on the Word of God! Fed on the Truth. Administration alone can be cold, legal, juridical and financial. You are not sent just to shear these sheep, you are sent to feed them, and how can you feed them unless you are with them in the fields — among your priests, among your religious, among your people, even among those who are not of your fold."

The lesson is clear: No pastoral charge can succeed except by the love of Christ. The first, the second and the third condition of exercising authority over others is that Christ be loved. And the criterion by which I may judge my love of Our Lord is service: feeding lambs and sheep.

I am frightened and consoled: frightened by these questions of Our Lord, for I know I am weak like Peter. In fact, I was baptized Peter.

But I am consoled, first, by the holy pasturage inherited from saintly shepherds: Bishop McQuaid, Bishop Hickey, Bishop O'Hern, Cardinal Mooney and our beloved Bishop Kearney.

If it is hard to save my own soul, it is going to be harder to be responsible for all the souls in this diocese. In conclusion, may I ask you to do me two favors: Pray for me; Write to me.

1. Pray for me daily to Mary, my patroness, that as she formed Jesus physically in her body, so she may form Jesus mystically in my soul, the better to serve you with a "passionless passion and wild tranquility."

2. Write to me, Brother priests and religious whom I love so deeply in the Heart of Christ. Tell me how to intensify the pastoral life of the parish, the diocese and the community, both in the letter and spirit of the Vatican Council. Our sanctification is our apostolate; our apostolate is our sanctification.

And you, my beloved People of God, my lambs and my sheep, write me the assurance of your prayers. Suggest positive, charitable and Christ-like means of how you laity may be made more holy in your parishes and then how you may bring that holiness into the temporal and secular order.

I hope you will love me, as I love you. But I warn you, I will betray you. "With traitorous trueness and loyal deceit" I will betray you into the Hands of Our Blessed Lord — that "Love we fall just short of in all love; that Beauty that leaves all other beauty pale." It was for Him our hearts were made, as its shape so well attests. The human heart is not perfect in shape and contour like a Valentine Heart. There seems to be a small piece missing. This may be to symbolize the part that was torn from the Heart of Universal Humanity on the Cross. But I think the real meaning is, that when God made your heart and mine, He kept a small sample of it in heaven, sent the rest of it into this world to be reminded that we can never be wholly peaceful, never completely happy, never whole-hearted, until we go back again to God to recover the piece He has been keeping for us from all eternity.

Dish washers of the world... Unite!



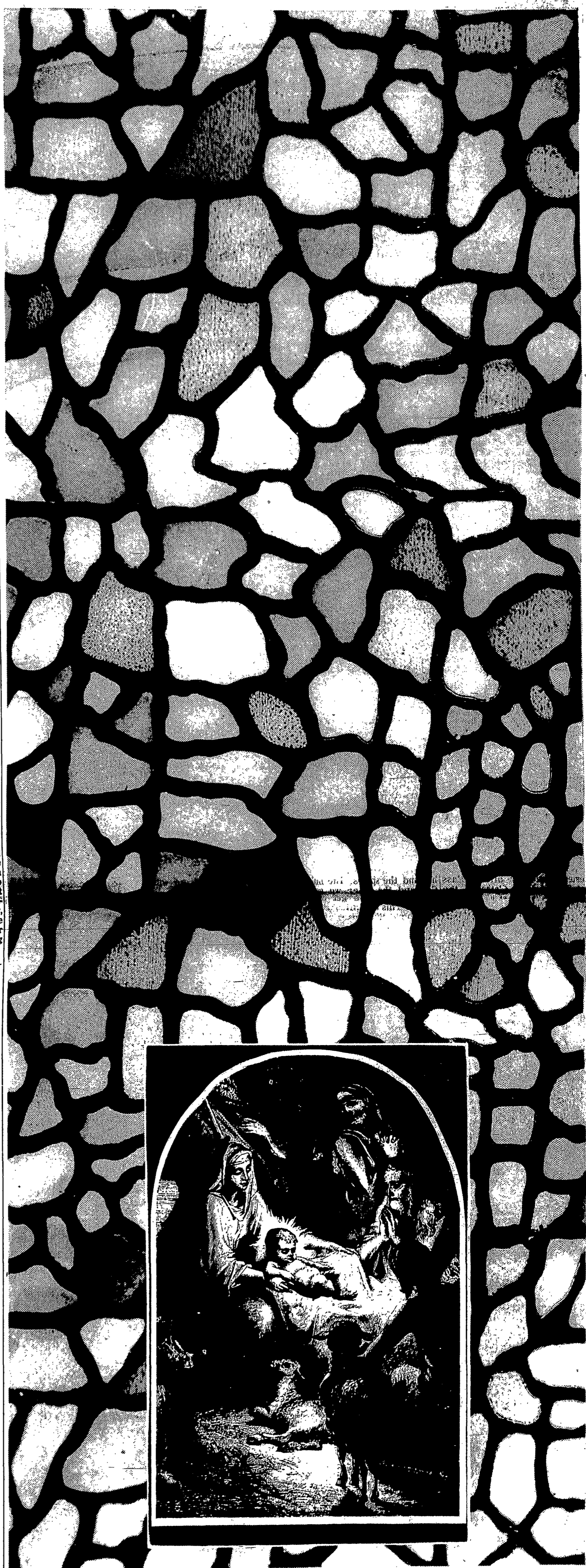
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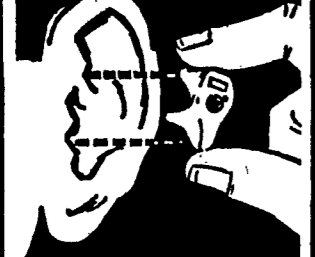


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