

... For Knowing One Another ... to be Stimulated

This is the text of a talk given by Pope Paul VI in Italian to a group of some 40 editors of Italian diocesan Catholic weeklies, received in audience Nov. 26, 1966.

Your presence tells us of a new reality: the National Federation of the Diocesan Catholic Weeklies.

We greet with lively satisfaction this organ of the Catholic press. The diocesan Catholic weeklies have for some time been the object of interest on the part of the central organizations of Italian Catholic Action and of promoters of the Catholic press.

We are happy now to note how such an interest takes organizational form, with aims tending to union, service, the wider circulation of these local weekly papers so that their voice may be more concordant, their contents richer, their style more modern, their beneficial influence more widespread.

It is unnecessary for us to speak to you, who are already completely convinced, of the importance of this kind of Catholic press.

If anything, we would wish that our renewed acknowledgement of its merit and proper function might strengthen in you the assurance that you serve a cause well worthy of your efforts and affection, and that it might exhort all those who read and support the Catholic weekly to maintain pride and faith in it. Also, that it might persuade those who are deeply interested in the cause of the Catholic press, to properly evaluate the quality and effectiveness of such a journalistic formula.

It is not in conflict with the more complete and important formula of the Catholic daily. It paves the way for and integrates it; it supplements it in areas which the daily does not reach; it nourishes, not so much in news but in ideas, a larger network of readers at the preferred level of the diocesan, parochial and family community.

It is a formula that deserves every support, not only for the diffusion of current Catholic thought, but also because of the popular character that ordinarily and wisely qualifies it. And again, because of the possibility of closer administration, with which it is content and in which it often flourishes.

After what Msgr. Pangrazio, in his position as secretary of

the bishops' commission for social communications, explained so very well concerning "the diocesan weekly in present-day reality," in his opening lecture at the national convention of editors of diocesan weeklies in Verona last May, we would have nothing to add except our praise in noting the clarity and authority of ideas, whether theoretical or practical, which direct your nascent federation; we only need to approve and to encourage.

Should it please you to find stimulation also from a word from us so as to continue well in your activity, we will urge you to give importance and effectiveness to your federation. Union, which does not deprive each paper of its freedom, its autonomy and its features, may turn out to be very useful for knowing one another and for measuring one another, in other words to be stimulated so as to give to your respective weekly its best form and content.

Union spurs all to go higher; the best one sets the example; even the weaker lets drop the shabby expressions and, though it must remain at a modest level either editorially or typographically, preserves to its words the dignity which is proper to an organ of the Catholic press.

Union is instructive. Furthermore, union members spur to make available mutual services of better quality.

As far as we know, there is already in operation a central service to furnish articles, information, news to the entire network of our weeklies.

Such a service, without depriving any weekly of its local character and without dispensing the individual editorial staff from giving its own paper some vivid tone of its own each week, together with abundant and well-presented information regarding the matters of its diocese, such a service, we were saying, may be very useful in a twofold aspect.

A first aspect is that of the content which, furnished by a well-equipped and authoritative center, gives at once to the paper the prestige of a voice capable of making itself heard; next, that of the efficacy resulting from a united agreement,



Pope Paul met Soviet Andrei Gromyko at UN.

in other words, a national consonance of the weeklies, which simultaneously and harmoniously spread a given thought, a given comment, a given line of judgment and of action.

Union becomes a true current of public opinion; it becomes an instrument of social education; in the Catholic field it becomes a communion of souls and of purposes, which we could not esteem enough.

We cannot think of a diocesan weekly without recalling the Gospel parables of the seed that grows to the point of taking on the size and function of a plant and of the ferment let into the dough which gives it development and a new taste.

The kingdom of heaven often lacks the great means the kingdom of this earth has at its disposal. We mean that our Catholic cause, even in the effort to confirm and extend it, usually lacks the means proportion-

ate to its merits and needs. It lives and struggles with inadequate tools, which often humiliate it rather than exalt it. But is not this in the designs of the Gospel?

If the divine relation of cause and effect (causality) which the Gospel message carries in itself is to reveal itself as that marvel which gives proof of its divine inner virtue, a modesty of temporal means is more profitable than damaging.

We say this to encourage all to trust and not to yield to laziness. We will always try to give to the good cause — in whose service we are militants — all the best equipment and all of the most effective collaboration, even temporal. But we shall not lose either the pride or the courage of our humble and daring struggle, should we have to take recourse to David's slingshot, rather than to the formidable arms of worldly powers.

Our trust, in the present instance, rests sincerely on the effectiveness of your weekly and diocesan press; however, happy experience already tells us what fruitful results its action has produced among our people.

Go forth, therefore, with wisdom and courage. Let the network of the weekly Catholic papers increase; let their make-up and the core of their word be perfected; let the Catholic voice in its diocesan interpretation be spread in every diocese, in every parish, in every association, in every family; let the federation of your well-deserving weekly papers be a close bond; let the tone of Catholic life be strengthened throughout the nation by the merit of these papers!

We extend our apostolic blessing to those who promote, those who direct, those who write, spread, read and aid these valued weeklies.

Christian Charity Inspired by 'God so loved the world He gave His Son'

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tole words: 'Religion pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to give aid to orphans and widows in their tribulation and to keep oneself unspotted from this world.' (James 1, 27).

"And furthermore: ... for how can he who does not love his brother, whom he sees, love God, whom he does not see?" (1 John 4, 20)." (Teachings of Paul VI, 3, p. 728/9).

It might seem a paradox that the Council, as the supreme assembly of bishops united with Peter, gathered together in prayer and study, and even physically separated from the rest of the world, should have shown such unmistakable evidence of charity which involves contact and dialogue with and

nearness to their suffering brethren. But it is not a paradox—it is indeed the truth, and everyone has understood and been affected and moved by it. Those who read the Council's documents bearing this in mind cannot but realize the yearnings of charity which moved the Council Fathers and which they communicated to the Church and to all of mankind in order that the charity of Christ may be truly and ultimately the unseen mover of all human activities: not only in reference to the urgent needs of individual persons, but also in reference to society, to international organizations and peoples.

Words which are quite grave—that developed the strong impressions of the ancient Fathers of the Church—resounded in the Council to recall to all of mankind, but first of all to Christians, the duty of love.

From the theological founda-

tions which spring from the very heart of God and from the mystery of the Incarnation, the Council went on to practical applications, without disdain for even the minutest details.

At this time you will make them the object of your careful consideration, and consequently it is not necessary to recall the words in question; we wished, however, to recall to you that a greater and holier persuasion might animate your hearts and give you encouragement toward the path undertaken.

As a society of Charity—thus in the name itself that indicates the spirit and aims of your action—you stand at this regal level, you present to the world the primary and highest law of the Gospel of Christ. You continue the charitable work of the early Christian community and fulfill faithfully the expectations of the present-day Church.

Let this suffice to say what is the place of the society in the varied and elected ranks of the lay apostolate organizations; also with what affection and hope the Pope looks upon it; and what inner fire, enthusiasm and effort should stimulate its members, to render their activities—with God's help—increasingly more effective and to purify them of any dross of human imperfection which may impede and weaken such action in its supernatural motives, or in communicating it to others, particularly the youth, who are receptive above all to the force of example and of generosity.

For the Vincentian activity to avoid any trace of bureaucracy, any suspicion of paternalism, any hesitation dictated by fear, any preconceived molds, will, today as always, depend solely on the following: that you follow the genuine teachings of Christianity and of the teaching

authority (of the Church) as participants and aware of its charitable concern for all mankind and as willing instruments, capable of making its irradiation more and more active and vast in the world.

We feel certain that these words will find in you a profound and thoughtful echo. We are touched by the thought of all you do and will still do in complete compliance with generosity and love.

May our prayer and our apostolic blessing be of encouragement to you in this. We impart it to you from our heart, including in a single throb of paternal benevolence all members of the Society of Charity who are active in Italy and all those who find in them a sensibility of words and works, an earnest solicitude and the example of a faith lived and compelling.