

Church is 'Holy, Penitent, always in Process of Renewal'

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. . . If we say that we have not sinned, we make (God) a liar, and His word is not in us." (1 John 1:8-10).

These Sacred Scriptures declare our guilt to be universal; hence the universal obligation to that repentance which Peter, in his sermon on Pentecost, declared necessary for the forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:38). Hence, too, the Church's constant recognition that all the faithful are required by divine law to do penance. As from the fact of sin we Christians can claim no exception, so from the obligation to penance we can seek no exemption.

Forms and seasons of penance vary from time to time and from people to people. But the need for conversion and salvation is unchanging, as is the necessity that, confessing our sinfulness, we perform, personally and in community, acts of penance in pledge of our inward penitence and conversion.

For these reasons, Christian peoples, members of a Church that is at once holy, penitent and always in process of renewal, have from the beginning observed seasons of days of penance. They have done so by community penitential observances as well as by personal acts of self-denial, they have imitated the example of the spotless Son of God Himself, concerning Whom the Sacred Scriptures tell us that He went into the desert to fast and to pray for forty days (Mark 1:13).

This Christ gave the example to which Paul appealed in teaching us how we, too, must come to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13).

Of the many penitential seasons which at one time or another have entered the liturgical calendar of Christians (who on this point have preserved the holy tradition of their Hebrew spiritual ancestors), three have particularly survived to our times: Advent, Lent and the vigils of certain feasts.

Changing customs, especially in connection with preparation for Christmas, have diminished popular appreciation of the Advent season. Something of the holiday mood of Christmas appears now to be anticipated in the days of the Advent season. As a result, this season has unfortunately lost in great measure the role of penitential preparation for Christmas that it once had.

Zealous Christians have striven to keep alive or to restore the spirit of Advent by resisting the trend away from the disciplines and austerities that once characterized the season among us. Perhaps their devout purpose will be better accomplished, and the point of Advent will be better fostered if we rely on the liturgical renewal and the new emphasis on the liturgy as noted in its deeper understanding as a season of effective preparation for the mystery of the Nativity.

For these reasons, we, the shepherds of souls of this Conference, call upon Catholics to make the Advent season, beginning with 1968, a time of meditation on the lessons taught by the liturgy and of increased participation in the liturgical rites by which the Advent mysteries are exemplified and their sanctifying effect is accomplished.

If in all Christian homes, churches, schools, retreat and other religious houses, liturgical observances are practiced with fresh fervor and fidelity to the penitential spirit of the liturgy, then Advent will again come into its own. Its spiritual purpose will again be clearly perceived.

A rich literature concerning family and community liturgical observances appropriate to Advent has fortunately developed in recent years. We urge instruction based upon it, counting on the liturgical renewal of ourselves and our people to provide for our spiritual obligations with respect to this season.

Lent has had a different history than Advent among us. Beginning with the powerful lesson of Ash Wednesday, it has retained its ancient appeal to the penitential spirit of our people. It has also acquired elements of popular piety which we Bishops would wish to encourage.

Accordingly, while appealing for greater development of the Lenten liturgy, as that of Advent, we hope that the observance of Lent as the principal season of penance in the Christian year will be intensified. This is the more desirable because of new insights into the central place in Christian faith of these Easter mysteries for the understanding and enjoyment of which Lent is the ancient penitential preparation.

Wherefore, we ask, urgently and prayerfully, that we, as people of God, make of the entire Lenten season a period of special penitential observance. Following the instructions of the Holy See, we declare that the obligation both to fast and to abstain from meat, an obligation observed under a more strict formality by our fathers in the faith, still binds on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday.

No Catholic Christian will lightly excuse himself from so hallowed an obligation on the Wednesday which solemnly

This is the complete text of the U.S. Catholic bishops statement on the performance of penitential practices such as fast and abstinence. The statement was issued at their November meeting.

opens the Lenten season and on that Friday called "Good" because on that day Christ suffered in the flesh and died for our sins.

In keeping with the letter and spirit of Pope Paul's Constitution "Poenitentini," we preserve for our dioceses the tradition of abstinence from meat on each of the Fridays of Lent, confident that no Catholic Christian will lightly hold himself excused from this penitential practice.

For all other weekdays of Lent, we strongly recommend participation in daily Mass and a self-imposed observance of fasting in the light of grave human needs which weigh on the Christian conscience in all seasons. We urge particularly during Lent, generosity to local, national and world programs of sharing of all things needed to translate our duty to penance into a means of implementing the right of the poor to their part in our abundance.

We also recommend spiritual studies, beginning with the Scriptures as well as the traditional Lenten devotions (sermons, Stations of the Cross and the Rosary) and all the self-denial summed up in the Christian concept of "mortification."

Let us witness to our love and imitation of Christ by special solicitude for the sick, the poor, the underprivileged, the imprisoned, the bed-ridden, the discouraged, the stranger, the lonely, and persons of other color, nationalities or background than our own. A catalogue of not merely suggested but required good works under these headings is provided by Our Blessed Lord Himself in His description of the Last Judgment (cf. Matt. 25:34-40). This salutary word of the Lord is necessary for all the year, but should be heeded with double care during Lent.

During the Lenten season, certain feasts occur which the liturgy or local custom traditionally exempts from the Lenten spirit of penance. The observance of these will continue to be set by local diocesan regulations.

Bishops Say 'No'

Meat on Friday, a Mortal Sin?

St. Louis — (RNS) — The question of the Lenten observance and mortal sin was clarified in a memorandum drawn up by the Committee on Doctrine of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, the St. Louis Review, archdiocesan newsweekly, reported here.

It said the memorandum was sent to Joseph Cardinal Ritter of St. Louis.

THE TWO MOST frequent questions the committee said, are: "Do I commit sin by deliberately failing to fast and abstain on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday?" and "Do I commit a mortal sin if I deliberately excuse myself from abstinence on the Fridays of Lent, for only a light reason?"

The answer to both questions is no, the Committee on Doctrine said. It emphasized, however, that all are bound to the precept of penance.

"In guiding the faithful, either in the confessional or outside of it, emphasis should be placed on the need of anyone who claims to be a follower of Christ to approach the Lord in a spirit of repentance. It is obvious that if his disposition is such that he is unwilling to do anything . . . he would reveal a mortally serious state of soul and further specifications would seem to be purely academic."

The committee's memorandum noted that the statement of the U.S. bishops last Fall which outlined obligations of penance, including fast and abstinence, "reflecting the thought of the Apostolic Constitution, does make a distinction between the obligation of Ash Wednesday and Good Friday and the obligation of abstinence on the Fridays of Lent."

"It would seem, therefore, that the reason that would excuse from the obligation of abstinence and fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday would necessarily be a more serious one than the excuse from the obligation of the remaining Fridays of Lent. This, however, would not give grounds for the distinction between mortal and venial sins."

The committee noted that while the answer to both questions posed is in the negative and that "although a distinction

Vatican Praise For UNESCO

Paris — (RNS) — The Vatican's permanent observer at the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in a statement noting the agency's 20th anniversary, reaffirmed the Catholic Church's support of its efforts in behalf of mankind.

Msr. Joseph Zabkar said that Pope Plus XII, John XXIII and Paul VI have demonstrated that the Church approves UNESCO's efforts by their sustained interest in the educational, scientific and cultural activities of the U.N.

other things would be more penitential. For these and related reasons, the Catholic Bishops of the United States, far from downgrading the traditional penitential observance of Friday, and motivated precisely by the desire to give the spirit of penance greater vitality, especially on Fridays, the day that Jesus died, urge our Catholic people henceforth to be guided by the following norms:

1. Friday itself remains a special day of penitential observance throughout the year, a time when those who seek perfection will be mindful of their personal sins and the sins of mankind which they are called upon to help expiate in union with Christ Crucified.

2. Friday should be in each week something of what Lent is in the entire year. For this reason we urge all to prepare for that weekly Easter that comes with each Sunday by freely making of every Friday a day of self-denial and mortification in prayerful remembrance of the passion of Jesus Christ.

3. Among the works of voluntary self-denial and personal penance which we especially commend to our people for the future observance of Friday, even though we hereby terminate the traditional law of abstinence as binding under pain of sin, as the sole prescribed means of observing Friday, we give first place to abstinence from flesh meat. We do so in the hope that the Catholic community will ordinarily continue to abstain from meat by free choice as formerly we did in obedience to Church law. Our expectation is based on the following considerations:

a. We shall thus freely and out of love for Christ Crucified show our solidarity with the generations of believers to whom this practice frequently became especially in times of persecution and of great poverty, no mean evidence of fidelity to Christ and His Church.

b. We shall thus also remind ourselves that as Christians, although immersed in the world and sharing its life, we must preserve a saving and necessary difference from the spirit of the world. Our deliberate, personal abstinence from meat

Accordingly, since the spirit of penance primarily suggests that we discipline ourselves in that which we enjoy most, to many in our day abstinence from meat no longer implies penance, while renunciation of

more especially because no longer required by law, will be an outward sign of inward spiritual values that we cherish.

Every Catholic Christian understands that the fast and abstinence regulations admit of change, unlike the commandments and precepts of that unchanging divine moral law which the Church must today and always defend as immutable. This said, we emphasize that our people are henceforth free from the obligation, traditionally binding, under pain of sin in what pertains to Friday abstinence, except as noted above for Lent. We stress this so that no scrupulosity will enter into examinations of conscience, confessions or personal decisions on this point.

Perhaps we should warn those who decide to keep the Friday abstinence for reasons of personal piety and special love that they must not pass judgment on those who elect to substitute other penitential observances. Friday, please God, will acquire among us other forms of penitential witness which may become as much a part of the devout way of life in the future as Friday abstinence from meat. In this connection we have foremost in mind the modern need for self-discipline in the use of stimulants and for a renewed emphasis on the virtue of temperance, especially in the use of alcoholic beverages.

It would bring great glory to God and good to souls if Fridays found our people doing volunteer work in hospitals, visiting the sick, serving the needs of the aged and the lonely, instructing the young in the Faith, participating as Christians in community affairs, and meeting our obligations to our families, our friends, our neighbors and our community, including our parishes, with a special zeal born of the desire to add the merit of penance to the other virtues exercised in good works born of living faith.

In summary, let it not be said that by this action, implementing the spirit of renewal coming out of the Council, we have abolished Friday, repudiated the holy traditions of our fathers, or diminished the insistence of the Church on the fact of sin and the need for penance. Rather, let it be proved by the spirit in which we

enter upon prayer and penance, not excluding fast and abstinence freely chosen, that these present decisions and recommendations of this Conference of Bishops will herald a new birth of loving faith and more profound penitential conversion, by both of which we become one with Christ, mature sons of God and servants of God's people.

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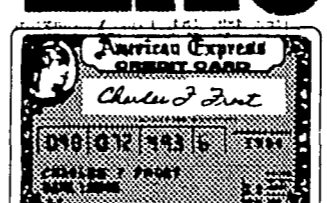
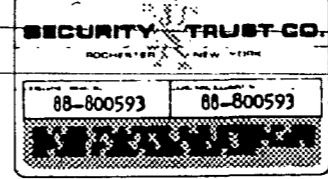
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Dioc Coaches and rep met at the Lafay schedule for the Left to right are Glen; Nicholas T. ney (Rochester); Aquinas (Rochester); DeSales (Geneva);

Moore Irish

Cardinal Mooney's big Cardinals posted their victory in fourteen d last Friday night, a bombed Aquinas, 55-39, Maiden Lane gym. The victory maintained the place Catholic League d between Mooney and M while Aquinas' loss r mented the Irish in the place position.


Cardinal Mooney to early lead which wa threatened once after t quarter buzzer. Aquinas Jim Brady pulled the within three at 20:17 through the second peri Eddie Nietopski's senior Otis Davis and Jim Har opened the margin to 3 the half.

In the second half macy of Mooney's c coupled with a careful offense, continued to much for Aquinas and game's end it was a rout.

Jim Harrington coppe high honors in two depar with 16 points and 23 re "Teammates of the se meats" of a 59-34 rou port Harrington chipped 12 and 10 alike, wh Brady led the Irish wit

In Saturday night act clinal Mooney won't the teat game of the se meats" of a 59-34 rou port Harrington chipped 12 and 10 alike, wh Brady led the Irish wit

Aquinas raised its r 97 with a double overth victory over Lyons Cent



HARRY MANGUR Chairman

The 50th anniversary Women's International Congress will o Rochester April 13. wi teams entered. Harry rian is honorary ch

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