

Why So Few Vocations?

'We Are Blind to Our Own Blindness'

In 1964 Pope Paul VI designated the Second Sunday after Easter of each year as a World Day of Prayer for Vocations. The choice of that particular day was based upon the Gospel of the day, the parable of the Good Shepherd. All Christians are asked to join in a worldwide crusade of prayer for more vocations to the clerical and religious life.

We should regard this call of Paul VI not just as a "nice" thing to do but as the solemn duty of all.

Vatican Council II in its decree on priestly training said, "The duty of fostering vocations belongs to the entire Christian community." And, as Bishop Sheen has pointed out to us, Jesus Christ designated only one method of obtaining more vocations — "PRAY the Lords of the harvest to send laborers into His harvest."

What these two statements amount to is that the Christian community must care whether or not there are vocations to the priestly and religious life. God is not a corporation presi-

This article is by Father Louis J. Hohman, diocesan director of vocations. He wrote it to aid readers in observance of this Sunday, April 9, as Vocation Sunday. A letter from Bishop Sheen on the subject will be read at Masses and published in next week's Courier.

dent who will send out salesmen to "hard-sell" his product, to impose it on the people. Rather he is the loving Father who will render his gifts of love when they are appreciated and desired.

One of the problems with vocations today — we have certainly heard enough about the acute shortage in most parts of the world — is that many, many people don't really care whether we have nuns and priests or not. They fail to see any real necessity for God's message or his gifts. Man has accomplished so much seemingly without the help of God, that pride takes over and the community says in effect, "We don't really need you."

The world today can't see very much sense in the words of Peter, "You were astray like

sheep, but now you have been brought back to the shepherd and guardian of your souls." I Peter 2: 25. Modern man does not think of himself as a straying sheep but rather as a soaring eagle, dominating all that he sees.

This is not a new phenomenon in the world's history. Many centuries ago the Psalmist wrote,

"Help us, O Lord, for no man keeps faith,
loyalty has vanished from among mankind:

Everyone lies, each man to his neighbor,
he speaks with smooth lips and a double heart.

May the Lord cut off all the lips that flatter,
the tongues that boast:

"By our tongues," they say, "we are heroes,
our lips are our own, who is our master?"

"Because the poor are oppressed and the needy are sighing,
Now I arise," says the Lord, "I will give salvation to him who longs for it." Psalm 11

It seems to be a constantly repeated fact of history that when things are going well for men (at least large numbers of them) they tend to forget God and depend on their own resources alone. There were no atheists in foxholes because there was no place else to look for help, but the opposite is also true — when all is well, who needs God?

Perhaps the best place to look for a reason for the shortage is among the people of God themselves who have forgotten that they need God Shepherds, because for all their apparent self sufficiency they are still straying sheep. We are most to be pitied if we are blind to

our own blindness, ignorant of our ignorance.

If we cannot see that technology and science have led us no nearer by themselves to our true humanness, then we are in a very sad state. Our prosperity and health and power may make us think of ourselves as "heroes." With the Psalmist we must learn to see that the Lord will give salvation from injustice and war and hunger to those who long for it.

I do not question for one moment that man's ingenuity and "know how" are important to building a "whole world," but even more so must God's redemptive power be brought to bear upon it. And that is the function of God's representatives in the priestly and religious life.

What this amounts to is that a lack of vocations can be traced directly to the attitude of people about religion and redemption — whether or not they feel a real need for it.

I quote our Holy Father, Paul VI: "The problem of recruiting and training a sufficient number of priests and religious strictly concerns all the faithful, not only because on it depends the religious future of Christian society, but also because the way in which it is solved gives a precise and indisputable index to the vitality of the faith and love in parishes and dioceses, as well as a testimony of the moral health of Catholic families.

"Where vocations to the priesthood and religious life are abundant, there the people live generously in accord with the Gospel. There, too, you find good and fervent parents who are not afraid, but rather happy and honored to give their children to the Church. There, also, you find zealous and faithful priests, for whom the continuity of their priesthood is their first and most important concern in the pastoral ministry.

"And, above all, there you find generous, pure and courageous boys and girls, who, fed by the Eucharistic life and responsive to the voice of Christ, are able to grow in their desire to serve the Church by giving themselves totally to the care of souls and to reproducing in themselves the features of the Good Shepherd whom they follow.

"Let us, then, all raise our voices to heaven: Families, parishes, religious communities, the sick in hospitals, the innocent children, that vocations may be increased and that many more of our youths may conform to the desires of the Sacred Heart of Jesus."



At the offertory of the Mass the priest pours wine into the chalice — with the realization that wine is made by the pressing of many grapes, an apt symbol of how the life of Jesus was "pressed" out of Him as the price of our redemption. His sacrificial life, climaxed on the Cross, is renewed at every Mass — and it is the task and privilege of every priest to be the minister of God and the people in this sacramental rite.

A Papal Prayer For Vocations

Following is the text of a Prayer for the Faithful for this Sunday's World Day of Prayer for Vocations. Father Louis J. Hohman, diocesan vocation director, said the prayer is adapted from a prayer recently composed by Pope Paul.

In the article to the right of this column, Father Hohman writes about the present religious vocation situation, one that obviously indicates the need for prayers such as the following:

Let us pray: United on this day with Pope Paul and the universal Church we pray for the following intentions:

That the Church may continue to hear and answer God's call to be a community of faith and love in the world, we pray to the Lord.

That young Christians may be guided by faith and love in their choice of a vocation in life, we pray to the Lord.

That the meaning and value of the priestly and religious vocations may become more widely known in the Church, we pray to the Lord.

That the laity of the Church may continue to grow in fulfilling their call and mission to the world, we pray to the Lord.

O Lord Jesus, always living to make intercession for us, extend our horizons to the entire world where so many brethren make silent supplication for the light of truth and the warmth of love, so that answering Your call, many young men and women may prolong here Your mission, edify Your Church, and become the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Amen.

Papal Primacy, A Case Of Loving Service

Vatican City — (NC) — Love is the keynote in the primacy of Peter and his successors in the guidance and service of the Christian people, Pope Paul, told thousands assembled in St. Peter's during a general audience, March 29.

Taking his theme from the day's Gospel in which Christ asks Peter, "Do you love Me more than these do?" the Pope stressed the significance of the question.

"He was asking the Apostle, the first confessor of faith in the divine Messianic mission of Christ, for that complementing characteristic which makes faith live and work, that is love, charity."

The Pope continued: "The primacy of Peter in the guidance and service of the Christian people was to be a pastoral primacy, a primacy of love. . . O pray, beloved sons, that all may understand this prodigious divine design."

'A Rendezvous with Revolution'

Boston — (RNS) — A Belgian cardinal cited Karl Marx for seeing clearly by the "light of the Gospel" and a U.S. Prince of the Church urged Roman Catholics to recognize their "rendezvous with revolution" at the fourth national conference of the Catholic Inter-American Cooperation Program here.

Cardinal Cushing of Boston joined Leo-Josef Cardinal Suenens, Archbishop of Malines-Brussels and Primate of Belgium, in an appeal for the integration of cultural, economic and religious forces to promote the "revolutionary" development of Latin American nations.

Both cardinals addressed a "grand assembly" of the three-day CICOP conference. Some 2,500 persons participated in the conference's eight general assemblies and 40 workshops.

The major speeches of both cardinals focused on the conference theme: "The Integration of Man and Society in Latin America: A Christian View."

Cardinal Suenens literally unsettled the international audience with the assertion that Karl Marx was clearer the "light of the Gospel" than did the Christians of his times.

"We carry the torch of the Gospel," the cardinal declared, "yet sometimes others see better its light."

Recalling that "in the midst of the social injustice of the last century, Marx in 1848 published his manifesto denouncing the exploitation of the masses," Cardinal Suenens noted that "it was nearly 50 years before the Church denounced the same evils and proposed a means of remedy in *Humanae Vitae* (an encyclical of Pope Leo XIII)."

The Belgian Primate stressed that the problems of the CICOP Conference were a challenge for the entire Church.

"Each member of the Church is obliged to speak and make his personal witness and irrevocable stand as a Christian," he said.

Cardinal Suenens urged delegates to "enter deeply into the spirit of the Council, wash ourselves clean of the dust we have accumulated through 20 centuries of pilgrimage, and find once again a true appreciation of poverty and social dimensions of what the Gospel requires of us."

He described the economic gap between the rich and the poor as "the No. 1 social problem of our time."

Noting that two-thirds of "the human family" live in conditions which are subhuman, Cardinal Suenens declared that "this gigantic disparity, this 'insult,' in the Pope's words, 'flung into the

face of humanity' is the most urgent problem facing the world today."

In a dramatic plea for the formation of a social conscience that won a warm response from the audience, Cardinal Suenens declared:

"We have to give men bread and the sacred host; we have to teach them the alphabet and the doctrine of Christ; we have to offer them social security and the Providence of God; we have to save men, not only souls."

Cardinal Cushing, who is chairman of the U.S. Bishops' Committee for Latin America, described the people as "marching from a land of darkness into a land of light . . . advancing from a static, traditional way of life, in which change was the exception, into a dynamic way of life in which change is the rule."

Cardinal Cushing urged that development "must be viewed in its entirety" and that various re-

forms "must be carried out, not in isolation one from another but as divergent aspects of one process of development."

Earlier in the conference, Maurice Cardinal Roy, Archbishop of Quebec, warned that "Christians no longer excuse themselves if they bury their heads in the sand and do not consider the problems" of Latin Americans.

Declaring that the problems and potential development of the Latin American nations represent a challenge for the U.S. and Canadian people, Cardinal Roy added:

"It is in carrying forth the light of faith — that we are able to see our brothers in all men. It is in accepting all the demands of justice and love that the Church will show itself truly Catholic . . . universally concerned for all the human family."

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Letters to the Editor

Ecumenical Journal

After reading in the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle of the idea of an Ecumenical Journal, I intended writing you with a word of encouragement for such an undertaking.

The idea is new, novel, inspiring in the world today is inspired by the Holy Spirit and anything I can do to be of assistance is most enthusiastically offered.

There seems to be a lot of "band-wagonism" in people and they like to be in on something if it seems to have an aura of success about it, but the pioneers in any new exploration, of physical, intellectual, philosophical or religious bent must plod on ahead of the majority; a task which has always taken, it seems, much dedication, perseverance and unalterable and deep faith in the ultimate and inherent goodness in "the people of God."

Dag Hammarskjold said in his "Markings", . . . to exist for the future of others without being suffocated by their present."

Another man whose words apply more and more to the events moving in the world today is Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and in his "Future of Man" he speaks of that unmeasurable "something" which exists in people who share a profound desire for the growth of mutual understanding — and respect — between people.

You have only to take two men, in any gathering, endowed with a mysterious sense

of the future. They will gravitate instinctively towards one another in the crowd; they will know one another."

If such a venture as an ecumenical journal does "get off the ground" be assured of the prayers of many "ordinary" people who share this same spirit described by Father de Chardin: "The Spirit breathes where He wills." Haven't we better keep the sails hoisted on the baroque of Peter? It is a most challenging and fascinating time to be aboard and I'd like to help with the rowing!

— Mrs. H. F. Curry, Seneca Falls

A Voice for Laymen

I feel that the current structure of the Catholic Church does not fairly represent the layman and should be changed to equally represent all members of the Church.

It is somewhat disturbing to hear the "Church" referred to in a condescending way as if it were a dark, distant conclave of medieval-appearing Roman Clerics. The term "Hierarchy of the Church" is equally disturbing. The initial thought that this phrase brings to mind is one of a princely, rather pompous procession of richly-robed clergy who either directly or indirectly, exercise a profound influence on the lives and destinies of millions of Catholics throughout the world.

The laity then, in this viewpoint, are treated as the "great unwashed," a mass of poor, ignorant plodding peasants under

the royal rule of the "Hierarchy."

What does the real Church consist of? It is made up of farmers, executives, seminarians, nuns, parish assistants, college professors, etc. . . .

I believe that Our Lord told Peter that he was the rock upon which — He would — build — His Church and that whatever was bound on earth would also be bound in Heaven. However, I don't recall any quotations by Christ stating that the entire ruling body of this world-wide church should, for generations, consist of clergy who represent only one percent of its membership. In a sense, the church, both conservative and liberal, lay and cleric, Italian, German, Oriental, African and American should be represented in Rome. As it stands now, the only vote a layman has is his contribution in the collection basket. However, the "Church" is said to be working on this.

Some parishes have introduced the tithing, an alleged biblical device which allows the layman to give more, in one lump sum without knowing where the money is going or how it is spent. Yet, we are assured it is spent wisely.

On the national level, millions of dollars were spent on the "Shrine of the Immaculate Conception" in Washington, D.C. I am sure Bishop Sheen would have appreciated a gift of that sum for the Propagation of the Faith, an organization which attempts to improve the spiritual and material lot of starving millions.

We can also see similar examples at the parish level. One parish recently planned heavily shares are held in part by the course by the majority of the

parish on Sunday only. However, one-third of the grade-school age Catholic children in that parish go to the public schools because the existing parochial school structure is not large enough to accommodate them.

What is the solution? Currently, the parish priest is required to be a combination accountant, janitor, school administrator, psychologist, social director, spiritual leader, and bingo-supervisor. The layman is not to be involved in the parish to the second collection on Sunday and meets the boys to play cards at the Holy Name Meeting on Monday nights. In some of the more progressive parishes, he is asked to join a Board of Trustees that in many cases simply gives lip service to a pastor's decisions.

Why don't we allow the priest to do the job he was trained for? If he attended only to the spiritual needs of the parish we wouldn't need three priests per thousand; we could get along nicely on one. The sermons might improve also.

What I am proposing is this: A democratically elected board of control on the parish level on which the priest would have one vote; a democratically elected school board where the priest has one vote; a democratically elected diocesan board where a parish, based on population representation will have an equal voice in diocesan decisions and finally a democratically elected Vatican Lay Council, where the diocese and/or archdiocese may be heard. These bodies should serve as the grassroots voice of the forgotten members of the Mystical Body of Christ, the laymen.

— Robert Kretschmer, Greece

Public Opinion Saves a Catholic Newspaper

By GARY MacEOIN

Rome — "The future of Italy, L'Avvenire d'Italia" is the name of the paper and the future of "L'Avvenire" is currently very much in doubt. But its proximate demise is not nearly as certain today as it seemed a few weeks ago, and this is a reflection of the new power of public opinion in the Church and of the growing wave of renewal here in Italy.

For, in spite of the solid front of conformity which the age-hardened structures continue to provide, the aggiornamento is a living reality in Italy. The conflict is not between the north and south of Europe. Neither is it between the center and the periphery. It is deep inside the Church in each country, including Italy.

Early in February, four cardinals and many civil and religious notables from all over Italy met in Bologna to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of L'Avvenire, a Catholic daily newspaper which has played a major part in the history of Italian Catholicism since the beginning of the century. Thanks to the excellent sources available to Raniero La Valle, its editor, and to his straightforward reporting, it acquired an international reputation during the second Vatican Council. Bishops as well as journalists read it in order to know what the

Council was doing and where it was going.

Not everyone, however, liked its openness during the Council or in subsequent years. Many Italian bishops have recently been revealing their displeasure with its political views, because it does not automatically support the position of the so-called Catholic Party, the moderate faction of the Christian Democrats. Its comments on religious matters are always careful, as befits an official organ, but many of the conservative elements in the Church feel that it identifies excessively with the reform movements.

Even while the anniversary was being celebrated in early February, it was an open secret that the upcoming meeting of the executive committee of the Italian Bishops' Conference was going to clip L'Avvenire's wings. And in fact, when the eighteen members met on February 24, they agreed to close it down immediately by incorporating it in another Catholic newspaper, "L'Italia" of Milan.

It was not a unanimous decision. Cardinal Lercaro of Bologna is known to have fought it resolutely, to the point of still continuing his opposition after it became clear that the motion would be overwhelmingly carried. Other important opponents of the motion were the Patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Urbani, and Archbishop Michael Pellegrino, of Turin.

While not necessarily identifying themselves with all the newspaper's policies, they felt that the Church would be the poorer if only one element was accorded full opportunity for the expression of its viewpoints.

Cardinal Urbani's attitude is particularly significant, since he is president of the Bishops' Conference. He was nevertheless voted down. The newspaper had to go because it was losing money and the bishops were no longer willing to pay the deficit. Of course, if the criterion of making or losing money was applied to all activities or even to all publications, it would have some logic. In fact, it is invoked when an excuse is needed.

As recently as ten years ago, this would have been the end of the story. But things are changing, and that is the message I'd like to get across to the growing number of Catholics who are frustrated by the slowness of reaction, those who admire the Charles Davis solution even if cultural or social conditioning restrains them from adopting it.

Thanks to the progress of exchange of information through the media of mass communications, the decision became public before it was implemented. It produced an immediate and vigorous reaction of public opinion both in Italy and in neighboring countries. This was polar-

ized by an article of Jacques Nobecourt, Italian correspondent of "Le Monde" of Paris, a newspaper which made a contribution to the success of the Council similar to that of L'Avvenire itself.

The outcome was a double take by the bishops. The administrative committee of the newspaper had a further meeting in the middle of March, at which it was decided to postpone a final decision for at least some weeks. The general feeling now is that L'Avvenire will not only survive but that the present staff will be retained and allowed to continue their established policies.

The precise relationship between the executive committee of the Italian Bishops' Conference and the administrative committee of L'Avvenire still remains in the dark, but it is clear that they are working together. Although he is archbishop of Bologna, Cardinal Lercaro does not control the newspaper. Apparently, shares are held in part by him, in part by Catholic organizations, in part by the Bishops' Conference.

What has emerged is that various forces have developed in Italy to create a dynamic tension and the balance of power in this case rests not with the shareholders but with public opinion. If this is correct, Catholicism in Italy has progressed significantly.



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Sonye Rede

Catholic

Cleveland — Catholic boycotting of movie theaters, much in the news 10 and 20 years ago, has become a major topic of debate here — touched off, ironically, when an "art" theater booked "A Man For All Seasons," the prize-winning film on St. Thomas More.

Immediately, the Cleveland diocese's Parent-Teacher League, through its Committee on Motion Pictures, announced that because of the Heights Art Theatre's "policy" of scheduling condemned films, "we are unable to recommend to our members" that they go to see it at that theater.

This "decision," published by the committee chairman in the letters-to-the-editor column of the diocesan "Catholic Universe Bulletin," drew a strong, lengthy rebuke from the executive board of the Diocesan English Teachers Association, and other letter-writers have both attacked and applauded the boycott.

At issue is not only the meaning and interpretation of the sentence in the annual film office "pledge" which reads, "I promise not to cooperate by my patronage with theaters which regularly show objectionable films," but also a difference of opinion as to the most effective way to discourage harmful films.

Several letter-writers, although admitting that "A Man For All Seasons" could be viewed at other theaters in the Cleveland area, argued that it was "short-sighted and spiteful" to boycott the Heights Art Theatre while "Seasons" was playing there.



Spring Te

Spring Tea in honor of Set on Sunday, April 9 from 3 ing, Chaplain Father John and Mrs. Robert Howe.