



Mrs. John Shield, U.S. delegate to Laitly Congress in Rome, speaks to Synod of Bishops in Vatican basement meeting room.



Prelates are shown just prior to a session of the Synod of Bishops meeting this month in Rome.

No Time for Trivia

Pope Paul's Prophetic Anger

One of the added advantages priests enjoy when they attend Forty Hours devotions in a parish church is the dialogue that inevitably develops in the rectory after the church services.

Before Pope John older priests usually discussed parish property problems such as inefficient boilers and leaky roofs while the younger clergy talked over plans for Sodality or parish school picnics.

Now the discussions are overwhelmingly theological or at least utterly ecclesiastical!

Such was the conversation at Holy Ghost rectory, Coldwater, where Father Albert Geiger was, as is his characteristic, the genial host.

Two of the more eminent clergymen there were Monsignor Wilfred Craugh, former rector of St. Bernard's Seminary, and Monsignor Francis B. Burns, dean of the faculty there. Both were professors of mine way back in the 1940's. Both thoroughly concur with Pope Paul's recent warning that "immense dangers" confront the Church — although they readily agree such has often been the Church's situation since its founding.

As a matter of fact, Pope Paul sees not just the Church but the whole of humanity confronted with a vast, crisis-laden reality — the fact of mankind's physical oneness but we are morally and socially divided as never before.

The chief note of Pope Paul's springtime encyclical "Populorum Progressio" — which has received scant attention from most Catholics — is its burning urgency. "Today the principal fact that we must all recognize is that the social question has become worldwide," the Pope stated. And he said if we don't find a reasonable solution to this fragmented condition, catastrophe lies ahead.

As in Pope John's encyclicals such as Mater et Magistra and Pacem in Terris, Pope Paul spells out the duties of the affluent nations and classes — which means us — to the needy nations and classes. The new factor in Pope Paul's encyclical is that of crisis and urgency.

Like Jeremiah or Ezechiel or any of the wrathful prophets of the Old Testament, Pope Paul speaks, in prophetic anger, of "the scandal of glaring inequalities" which still divide the human family. He warns self-styled Christians who ignore a social situation which grows worse by the hour that their "continued greed will certainly call down upon them the judgment of God and the wrath of the poor." Do not the headlines in our daily newspapers confirm this warning? How many more inner-city riots do we need before we realize the Pope knows what he is talking about?

The Pope is no mere prophet of doom, however. "We must begin to work together to build the common future of the human race," he said in his encyclical. He calls us not just to let things happen but to shape the future ourselves — and he provides us, as also did his predecessors, with a realistic approach.

What is perhaps interesting to note here is an aspect of the matter Monsignor Burns mentioned at the Holy Ghost Forty Hours conversation — that the Popes since Leo XIII in 1891 have summoned Catholics to this responsibility. Monsignor J. Francis Goggin, rector at St. Bernard's three decades ago, introduced a special course in the papal social doctrine — taught by Monsignor Burns, who by the way is one of the pioneers in ecumenical community action but has received hardly any publicity for it.

Somehow we priests who were so well instructed in this social doctrine subject, now described by the Church's highest authority to be most urgent, — we priests too often got sidetracked on issues of individual moralistic and pietistic trivia, failing to focus the attention of Catholic lay people on the repeated demands of the Popes as to the tragic dichotomy between the "haves" and the "have not" people.

As I look back to my days in St. Bernard's, I realize now more than ever that we had fore-sighted and far-sighted rectors and professors. I just wish we had paid better attention to them — and had subsequently done far better what they taught us. I have confidence the Seminary students today will be attentive to Pope Paul's most recent encyclical and, in the years ahead, aid their parishioners to a greater awareness of their duty to build a world where all people can enjoy "human life in its true meaning."

—Father Henry A. Atwell

Pope Paul Insists Church Authority to Stay

By FATHER ROBERT A. GRAHAM, S.J.

Vatican City — (RNS)—Pope Paul VI could hardly have been more incisive in asserting the divine authority of the bishops and the Pope than when addressing the delegates to the third Congress of the Lay Apostolate.

He spoke in phrases as gentle, conciliatory and roundabout as he could make them. But his meaning was clear. The lay apostolate is not an independent activity but remains, in the final analysis, under the direction of the hierarchy. Any other relationship would be contrary, he said, to the constitution of the Church as willed by its founder.

In other words, if there be a problem of obedience and authority in the Church today it will not be solved, so far as Pope Paul is concerned, by episcopal abdication.

Probably the address was already prepared before the Con-

gress met and had no necessary connection with what had already happened. The place of the lay apostolate in the hierarchical structure is a long-standing problem, and one that probably will never be fully solved. But the listeners in St. Peter's Basilica thought of the incident of the previous day when some delegates thought for a moment that their discussion would not be entirely free or uninhibited.

The whole misunderstanding was clarified by Maurice Cardinal Roy of Quebec when, in the visible satisfaction of all, he declared that the Congress delegates were entitled to express their opinions freely and that there was no intent to dictate to them.

Cardinal Roy is president of the Ecumenical Commission of the Congress. An apparently garbled version of his remarks to other bishops had gone like wildfire through the body. The bishops accompanying national delegations allegedly were exhorted to keep

a close eye on orthodoxy of opinions expressed and to "insinuate" whatever views they thought were needed.

The Dutch delegation, for one, wrote to the steering committee protesting the "rather paternalistic tone in treating of the possible theological and other insufficiencies of the laymen" in the reported statement. A postscript added that "a copy of this letter will be sent to some of our friends in the other delegations."

Needless to say, the press was also privileged to receive a copy of this letter.

The incident closed as quickly as it had opened. As the discussions on birth control have demonstrated, the delegates felt no clammy hand of ecclesiastical censorship on their shoulders. But is there any inconsistency between the clarifications of Cardinal Roy concerning the freedom of the congress, and those of the Pope insisting on the need to act in full and unfailing union at all times with

the bishops? It is a matter of stress and of viewpoint.

Laymen have no ambitions to stir themselves up as a parliament of their own, deciding which course the Catholic Church shall take in pursuit of its mission, but they do feel that they have special competence in many fields in which their judgment is unique if not definitive. By the same token, nothing could be more self-defeating than an attempt to clericalize what is by definition a layman's mission. The problem lies in the creation of mutual confidence and a clear delineation of the areas in which the layman, as a man living in the world, can carry his own personal testimony as a Christian.

The same search for due autonomy within the framework of the Church's teaching and pastoral authority is going on in the Synod of Bishops. A special commission elected for that purpose is now at work on the famous crisis of faith. Opinion seems divided as to where the

crisis is and from where it comes. Is it among the faithful or the professional theologians? Does it come from within or from without the Church?

It seems likely that the commission will accept the recommendation of many synodists encouraging the "dialogue" between the bishops and the theologians to further, as one bishop put it, "the distinction between the faith that saves and the theology that serves the faith."

By coincidence, therefore, two important groups are meeting simultaneously in Rome with a common issue shared by both. This is the quest for rules of the dialogue of these two vital segments of the Church — the professional theologians and the professional lay apostles — with the ruling Church hierarchy.

Solid signs indicate that though Pope Paul wants to put the unifying authority of the Pope and hierarchy on the record, the principle form of the future is decentralization.

Few Fireworks as Synod Nears Close

By ARTHUR MOORE
Special Correspondent

Vatican City — (RNS) — Of the five major questions on the agenda of the Synod of Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church, now meeting in Rome, the document on doctrine (or, as it is titled, on dangers to the faith and on atheism) was expected to produce the most fireworks. It covers the broadest area of any of the topics to be discussed.

It seemed the most likely place for such subjects as birth control and clerical celibacy to be introduced into the debate, if they were to be brought in at all. Finally, its negative approach of discussing supposed

dangers was one that had been set aside by the Second Vatican Council and one that is thought by many to be outmoded today.

During the debate, which dominated the second week of the Synod's meeting, there was indeed a certain amount of tension and even clash in the discussion. (Insofar as an outsider can tell, thanks to the semi-opaque veil of mystification set up around the Synod by its rules.) This discussion, however, followed a somewhat different path than an observer thinking back to Vatican II. "Conservative-progressive" clashes might have expected.

To begin with, the background paper presented to the bishops was more balanced than had been expected. It was described by one expert as if it had been prepared by a conservative, then reworked by a progressive to give it weight on the other side. The tone ended up conservative but not so much so as to give as much offense.

The errors warned against seemed vague in definition. The theologians responsible for the errors were hard to identify. This trend continued in the discussion. There were denunciations of "third rate" theologians, whose work was not "mature," but invective is no

substitute for description. (There were enough ringing affirmations that "God is not dead," that the Messrs. Altizer and Hamilton would be well advised to unpack if they were headed for Rome.)

The substantive problem that occupied the bishops was a very real one. What is the role of the ordinary magisterium (or teaching office) of the church (and, more particularly, of the bishops) in an age of great theological interest, theological ferment, and wide dissemination of ideas by the mass media? The mass media came in for as many "backshots as those mysterious theologians, presumably on the grounds that what you don't know can't hurt you.

Some, most notably the Italians, Spaniards, the Eastern Churches, and some Bishops from Africa, called for a return to the old method of denouncing errors. The majority, however, opposed such a condemnation. Some did not want such a condemnation; others simply did not believe that it would work. Many, in marked distinction to many recent papal statements, said that the dangers were not so great as they had been painted.

That matter of opinion aside, the relationship between the theologians and bishops in the post-conciliar Church is an open question. It is a problem common to all Churches who do not opt for either simple authoritarianism or simple anti-intellectualism. Many Protestant churches in the United States have sidestepped the issue by substituting organization or social goals for doctrine, but it is questionable whether refusing

to answer the question eliminates it.

The two chief suggestions of the bishops seemed to be a proposal for a theological academy or institute in Rome where discussion could take place and for the establishment of a "rule of faith" which would not be a creed but which would sort out bad doctrine from good in some as yet unexplained manner.

If this discussion was mildly encouraging to those who have hopes for the Synod, its generally passive role as regards the agenda and procedures is less so. Repeatedly, the thought has been expressed, "We are here as the Pope's guests, to advise him as he sees fit." This may be simple courtesy but there are no indications on the surface that it does not express the general attitude. Optimists insist that this Synod is only a beginning on which real authority can grow. As one theologian put it, "It is only the press who want immediate results. Here we think in centuries."

The contrast between these two meetings is vast. The bishops move prudently forward, pleasing neither the optimists nor the pessimists very much, while the laity insistently ask whether this speed or method of approach is good enough. One editor said to me, "We have two Churches here." That was meant as an exaggeration but the tension is visible. The days ahead should be interesting.

Mr. Moore, editor of World Outlook, Methodist missions magazine, is a lay theologian who has written widely on ecumenical developments.



Dr. Vittorio Veronese, pioneer Catholic layman in the Church's lay apostolate, was one of many speakers at mid-October Congress of the Laity held in Rome. Next to him is Cardinal Maurice Roy of Quebec who heads the Vatican's commission on the laity.

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