

Maximos Saigh -- a Vision of What Church Should Be

The Catholic Church, and the world has lost one of its most eloquent champions of freedom.

The bearded, near ninety Patriarch Maximos IV Saigh died early this month — his legacy being his dynamic life and words for the people not just for his own nation and rite but for an open-view of faith for all people.

Like Pope John, Maximos had a vision of what the Church should be to be true to its vocation in today's rapidly changing world — a vision clearer than many churchmen half his age.

Born in Aleppo, Syria, April 10, 1878, Joseph Saigh began his studies at the Episcopal College and then studied at the Terra Sancta College of the Franciscan Fathers of his native city.

In 1890 he entered the seminary of St. Anne in Jerusalem directed by the White Fathers. There he studied philosophy and theology.

Wishing to dedicate himself to apostolic work outside his own diocese, he asked to defer his ordination by three years, during which he remained at the seminary as a professor of Arabic language and literature. He then joined the Society of the Missionaries of St. Paul which had just been founded by Msgr. Germain Moaccad at Harissa, Lebanon. He was one of the first members and for 14 years one of the most active.

On Sept. 17, 1905, in the parish church of the village of Baouneh, Lebanon, he was ordained by Melkite-rite Archbishop Athanasios Sawaya of Beirut.

Before his death, Msgr. Moaccad charged the future patriarch with the care and direction of the society which he had founded and which was already

showing a promising outlook for great work in the apostolic mission field. At the death of the founder in 1912, Father Joseph Saigh became the superior of the young society and kept this post until 1919, showing remarkable courage in sustaining the hardships of the First World War.

A fearless preacher and missionary, he spread the gospel in innumerable parishes in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Egypt.

On Aug. 31, 1919, he was consecrated archbishop of Tyre by Patriarch Demetrios Cadi and directed this diocese for 14 years.

The beginnings of his episcopate were marked by grave troubles in politics by violence, and by threats of massacre in the region of his archdiocese. In these circumstances, more than once he risked his own life to save his people and once he made a nighttime trip in a frail ship in a raging sea from Tyre to Beirut to alert the authorities.

When peace was reestablished, he dedicated his whole life to the service of his archdiocese and most particularly to the peasants and fishermen who comprised the majority of the inhabitants of the ancient fishing port of Tyre.

Like a shepherd attending his flock, he knew everyone by name and they knew him and followed him. Last year, paying another visit to Tyre despite his age and the long distance, he was able to address by name all the remaining faithful of the older generations who flocked around him to kiss the hands of their former pastor.

At this time, the Holy See conferred on him the title of apostolic visitor (caretaker of the faithful) of the Melkite-immigrants to North America. For a year he toured many places, organizing parishes and



MAXIMOS SAIGH
like Pope John

building churches. On his return from America, he was given another mission, this time to help the Melkite-rite religious communities, to organize and develop them.

On Aug. 30, 1933, he was transferred to the metropolitan seat of Beirut. A new period began which was to last 14 years.

Thanks to his exceptional administrative ability, he endowed his diocese with several churches, schools and residences. He took an active and important part in the national movement, which aimed at the recognition of full and complete independence for Lebanon.

In 1936 he founded the Congregation of Religious Missionaries of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, which today has more than 100 Religious in more than a dozen houses dedicated to the education of youth, to hospital service and to charitable works in Lebanon, Syria and Egypt.

On the death of Patriarch Cyril IX Moghabgham, he was elected by the synod Oct. 10,

1947, Patriarch of the Melkite-rite community. To this post of great responsibility, he was to give himself in the fullest measure. In the course of 20 years as patriarch, he led his community with courage and wisdom during the midst of a period of turmoil in the Middle East.

Everywhere he went, there were soon new churches, new schools and new dispensaries.

At Damascus, where he resided most frequently, he reorganized schools, developed city and rural parishes and founded new churches.

In Lebanon, where he came every summer to his residence at Ain Traa, he was a courageous and unselfish leader, avoiding politics to serve entirely the interests of the Lebanese nation.

His influence has been felt as far as the Sudan and Iraq. Once a year at least he called together the bishops under him for a week-long meeting, in the course of which all the problems of the Church community were examined. Thus he inaugurated an ecclesiastical innovation based on collegiality and assured to his rite homogeneity and a remarkable cohesion.

He was responsible for "caisse communautaire," an interdiocesan organization aimed at assisting financially disadvantaged dioceses.

At his instigation a liturgical commission has worked for 20 years without cease at the revision of the liturgical books.

He opened his community to new Religious congregations from the West and sought to better integrate them into the Church of the East.

He paid particular attention to the emigrating faithful.

Long and patient efforts and hard work succeeded in the establishment of an Eastern-rite

hierarchy in Brazil and the United States. He made a five-month tour of the American communities in 1955. Everywhere he advised abandoning the ghetto mentality and spreading knowledge of the Eastern-rites over a wide area of Latin America.

He was an ardent apostle of ecumenism, a promoter of closer relations among the churches as the first condition for their union. He spared no effort to create an atmosphere psychologically, theologically and canonically indispensable to Christian unity. To this end he strongly advocated safeguarding the rights of the Eastern-rites. He defended patriarchal prerogatives and asserted the vocation of his own community to the service of the union of Churches.

For this purpose he went eight times to Rome between 1948 and 1965, to Paris four times between 1951 and 1966, as well as to Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and Turkey. In the same spirit he praised the Greek Orthodox Church and the Anglican Church for seeking to develop friendship and collaboration with the other churches of the East.

The Second Vatican Council was the high point of his life. He prepared for it meticulously with the assistance of his episcopate.

It is clear why he has been assessed by contemporary history as one of the men who made the council.

His booklet "The Voice of the Church in the East" appeared in 1962 and was translated into several languages. It described his participation in the Council.

Later, a second book appeared, "The Greek Melkite Church at the Council." It contained, together with his own contributions, notes and reports of the

patriarchs and prelates of his rite at the Council.

(At the Second Vatican Council on Oct. 29, 1964, Cardinal Saigh said that Catholic doctrine on birth control was not observed in "the immense majority" of Catholic homes, and added, "The faithful find themselves forced to live in rupture with the law of the Church because of the inability to find the viable solution between two contradictory imperatives: conscience and normal conjugal life."

(He went on to say that unregulated human fecundity had condemned vast numbers of people to "unworthy and hopeless misery" and he asked whether "God really wants this depressing and unnatural dead end."

(In a note written in Nov. 1966 and published in the book of the Council, the patriarch also urged the creation of a high-level Church commission to study the problem of marriages in which one spouse has unjustly abandoned the other.

(He said that the Catholic Church could not retain its peace of mind unless it did all in its power to find a way to remedy the "cases of truly revolting injustice which condemn human beings whose vocation is to live in the normal state of marriage and who are prevented from so living through no fault of their own and who cannot, humanly speaking, endure this abnormal state for their whole lifetime.")

In February, 1965, Pope Paul VI made him a cardinal. The ceremony was modified in accordance with the ancient prerogatives of the Eastern Church. Cardinal Saigh accepted the new title as a supplementary honor, simply and with trust, but nothing would change his mode of life, and in his outlook he would remain a patriarch.



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view more

Too White, I Urge Jesuits

By FATHER A. GRAHAM
Special Correspondent

Rome — (RNS) — Am Jesuits were urged by Superior General, Father Arrupe, S.J., to adopt new measures to promote equality.

In an exhortatory letter members of the order in U.S. the superior severely criticized the attitudes of Jesuits on racial problems.

He said that American Jesuits who had worked with grant groups when they were poor and exploited, have "tended to become ideologically and more with the disclass, white segment population" as the more advanced economically, socially and politically.

Father Arrupe said, "The Society of Jesus has committed its manpower other resources" to the apostolate "in any degree commensurate with the needs of the Negroes to share services."

According to a spokesman of the Rome headquarters order, the document was prepared in continuing cooperation with American Jesuits and with provincial superiors. Recent meetings with visiting American Negroes are believed to have influenced the document final form.

The establishment of city residences for Jesuits, scholars, for ordination and brotherhood of the American province to give them "the opportunity to gain personal experience in inner-city problems and to develop genuine interracial relations." He called

Jesuits Pledge Fuller To Race

Jesuit Fathers in Rome are planning a prompt response to greater involvement in "racial crisis" request of their Superior General in Father Arrupe.

A special summer session in a Negro neighborhood, at increasing the number of Negro students at the Jesuit High School, will focus attention on the racial situation, Father Albert Plett, McQuaid rector this semester, some of the 33 on the McQuaid staff will reside in the neighborhood in order to work with the students on Sundays and on Saturdays.

In addition, McQuaid seeks to add Negro teachers to its faculty by next year. At present, there are 10 students currently enrolled in the South Clinton Avenue school.

In his mandate to his Jesuits in America, Father Arrupe said bluntly: "Capture the rich potential of the Civil Rights movement or it will be squandered in a destructive conflict, and the permanent fracture of the American society."

Some of the recommendations made by the Superior toward greater Jesuit action for Negroes were: Reassessment of many focus on the problems of injustice and poverty; lo-

Jews, Christians Stand in New Light after June War

(By Religious News Service)

Jewish peoplehood — or the relationship of diaspora Jews to Israel — is becoming a leading topic for Christian-Jewish dialogue.

And if recent statements of Jewish and Christian leaders are any indication, the dialogue is going to grow more intense as it tackles the subject.

"As a result of the Middle East War," said Rabbi Balfour Brickner, head of the Commission on Interfaith Activities of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, "there is a more honest confrontation between Christians and Jews than ever before."

Morris Abram, president of the American Jewish Committee, said he feels the dialogue has "become much more realistic

... which is not to say more amiable."

Dr. David Hunter, deputy general secretary of the National Council of Churches, agreed that as Jews and Christians have begun talking about the significance of Israel to the Jews, the discussions have become "more intense."

"In the past," commented Mr. Abram, "there's always been a discourse on the basis of our common patrimony. It's only when you get to the points of difference that the problems — and the real opportunity — arise."

Among recent major spurts to Jewish-Christian dialogue are the documents denouncing anti-Semitism from the 1961 World Council of Churches' Third Assembly, the 1964 meeting of Lutheran scholars in Legumkoster, Denmark, the 1965 Vatican Council II declaration on the

Jews, and the American Catholic Bishops' guidelines in 1967. The appointment of Jews and Christians to posts at each other's seminaries has also sparked further dialogue.

But the spur this time has come from a different kind of event — the Middle East War of June 5.

For the war brought to the surface what many Christians and Jews had not articulated in their meetings together — the importance of the state of Israel for the worldwide Jewish community.

"I have heard a number of Jews say that despite their great interest and devotion to Israel," said Dr. Hunter, "they never realized how essential Israel was until it was threatened."

Jewish leaders generally have confirmed the observation that the war brought home the importance of Israel to diaspora Jews. "The war made even the most unaffiliated Jews react," said Rabbi Brickner.

One theologian, Rabbi Richard L. Rubenstein, director of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation at the University of Pittsburgh, suggested that the Israeli victory would require a "drastic rewriting" of Jewish theology and history to emphasize the theme of homecoming. "I have supplanted time in Jewish religious sentiment," he said.

In a lecture in London, England, Professor Zwi Werblowsky, dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, noted that the Jews returned to Palestine "not

just to establish one more pluralistic utopia . . . but in order to achieve a fullness of Jewish life, to fulfill a Jewish destiny.

"Jews also realize," he said, "that the return to the ancient land makes sense only as a corporate effort to create a new Jewish life, not as a denomination by as a body politic."

Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, of Englewood, N.J., wrote in the lay-edited National Catholic Reporter, that "Christians will fail to understand Jewish emotion unless we somehow communicate the notion that the concern of Jews for Israel is part of our deepest religious commitment."

"At the very core of the unity of the world Jewish community is the mystery of Israel, both as an ongoing people and in the emotional and spiritual ties of Jew to the Holy Land and to the Jews who are there."

Some Catholic and Protestant leaders and groups, since the war, have articulated their deeper understanding of the meaning of Israel for Jews. In Strasbourg, France, a Catholic sponsored Symposium of Christian-Jewish Relations said its members "recognize how profoundly the Jews are bound to the Holy Land and especially to Jerusalem."

Father Edward Flannery, executive secretary of the Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations at Seton Hall University, noted a change in the dialogue since the June 5 crisis.

"It was another failure of communication between Chris-

tians and Jews," said Father Flannery. "But bringing the issue out in the open now has put relations on a more realistic basis. It should dispose of any idea on the part of Christians that Jews have no right to be in Israel — an old corollary of the deicide charge."

"But to many Christians," the priest and author of *The Anguish of the Jews* continued, "the Middle East crisis was purely a political affair, in the mind of the Jew, the land of Israel is of crucial importance."

Sixteen Christian theologians, including Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, retired vice-president of Union Theological Seminary of New York, Dr. Krister Stendahl of Harvard Divinity School, and Dr. Jerald C. Brauer, dean of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, issued a statement following the outbreak of the June war.

"Judaism has at its center an indissoluble bond between the people of Israel and the land of Israel. For Christians, to acknowledge the necessity of Judaism presupposes inextricable ties with the land of Israel and the city of David. . . ."

Another group of Christian and Jewish theologians won approval from the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission for a document which said that the creation of the state of Israel "is of tremendous importance for the great majority of Jews; it has meant for them a new feeling of self-assurance and security

which the Gentile world had failed to give them."

Most of the statements, however, were connected with the difficult political questions on the expansion of Israel and proposed internationalization of Jerusalem, and there has been discontent among the Jewish community with the general lack of Christian condemnation of the Arab threats against Israel.

Yet that dissatisfaction, with a few exceptions, does not seem at this time to signal any hiatus to the Christian-Jewish dialogue.

Msgr. John M. Oesterreicher, one of the architects of Vatican II's Declaration on Non-Christian Religions, said that the "vast majority of Christians do not quite understand the Jewish view of peoplehood because it is not part of their experience."

"But dialogue requires that I listen to the other and take him into my own being; I must try to understand the other as he understands himself. The only sensible conclusion is more conversations rather than less. And the topic of the state of Israel and Jewish peoplehood should be important, because it will give Christians an idea of what Jews are like."

Rabbi Brickner was no less director of the American Jewish Committee's Department of Interreligious Affairs, in a call for continuation of the dialogue, observed that Jews have suffered in the "Christian West," but added, "That tendency to invoke freely the memory of our martyred brothers, even in so-called defense of Jewish dignity in

itself can become, and often has become, an act of blasphemy."

Rabbi Brickner was no less blunt in a recent statement, "I think it's time," he said, "that we stopped banging Christians on the nose on this matter of their alleged failure (to protest the Arab threats)."

"There was a failure, but at a time when there is greater ecumenism than ever before it is a deceitful and harmful thing for Jews constantly to use this alleged failure to justify their own previous desire to remain aloof from the Christian community."

Rabbi Henry Siegman, executive vice-president of the Synagogue Council, has pointed out that the problem in Jewish-Christian dialogue on the June crisis was that "the churches saw the situation as a complicated political issue while we Jews saw it as a clear moral question of genocide."

While it is not likely that the discussion of Jewish peoplehood will replace the long-standing theme of joint social concern, the issue has taken its place as a most necessary item on the agenda.

Another indication of the impact the introduction of the topic will have on future dialogue came from Father Flannery.

"I think this is a temporary phase," he said, "and that we'll soon be getting on to other topics. But it was necessary to put our dialogue on a firmer basis."

Economic Problems Worse than Educational

Bogota — (NC) — A French sociologist on his way home after a year of research at the Catholic University of Valparaiso, Chile, urged Church authorities to concentrate their education efforts on training lay leaders to take temporal responsibility in their nations' social and economic life.

The sociologist, Dominican Father Alain Birou, pointed out here that problems of education, although serious, are not the main barriers to Latin American development. The real obstacles to progress, he said, "are the flight of local wealth into foreign banks, a loss that will surpasses the amounts poured in by foreign aid and investment; government bureaucracy; and the passive attitude of the population."

"A radical change," he emphasized, "must be effected in the power structures of these countries in order to free them from the control of self-promoting interests working against the common good."

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Laymen Nudge Church toward Democracy

By GARY MacEOIN

Rome — One deserves a long stay in a rest home after the Congress for the Lay Apostolate. To pack a total re-evaluation of the Christian's place in the Church and the world into one week is a tall order. Morning, afternoon and evening, the 3,000 delegates met in large and small groups, in widely separated places. To participate in some discussions, to follow others, simultaneously keeping half an eye on the progress of the Synod of Bishops demanded daily miracles of bilocation and often trilocation.

I cannot pretend to have a clear picture of even the most important particular happenings, and besides the news services have already told more than I could encompass in a single piece. But I do want to record a few major reactions.

I think the one most universally shared was a gratified amazement at the degree to which the spirit of Vatican II has percolated to the laity of almost all countries. As many delegates confessed, they were far from fully representative of the public opinions of their countries, having been selected by clerical-controlled institutions suffering from a time-lag. Many were older people being honored for years of faithful service. The typical delegate tended consequently to be more conservative than the typical Christian of his country.

In spite of this, and in spite of the

difficulty of establishing the consensus of a poorly structured body of so vast a size and such diverse interests, there emerged instantly a consciousness of the new role and function proclaimed for the Christian by Vatican II. The consciousness extended to both the internal role and function as an active participant in the Church's own life, and to the external in terms of commitment to and concern for the world in which we live.

The official resolutions adopted by overwhelming majorities express these qualities. In addition to the unambiguous affirmation of belief that the choice of means in responsible family planning is a matter for the conscience of the married couple, and the call to the Church to give women equal rights and status, both of which made big news headlines, I think the "follow-up" resolution very significant.

The permanent committee for organizing congresses of the laity will shortly be absorbed into the Council on the Laity (Consilium de Laicis) set up as a Vatican Secretariat last January. The Congress asked the Pope to enlarge that Council "in accordance with democratic processes, so that it may be truly representative of the multiple cultures, organizations and forms of the lay apostolate in all parts of the world." It asked that the enlarged Council work to speed the democratic establishment of structures of the laity at all levels of the Church. And it urged its own delegates to start to work immediately

on their return home "for the democratic implementation at all levels of the purposes of the lay councils."

The stress on democratic process in the resolution reflected no sentiment of rebellion, as far as I could determine. Rather it expressed an awareness that the Christian must not live schizophrenically, that the structures of his religious life cannot be less human than those evolved by civil society. It expressed the further awareness that his dialogue with the world is frustrated by archaic autocratic structures which destroy the credibility of the Christian giving testimony to contemporary man.

Democratic process and witness were dominant themes in various other resolutions which procedural defects kept from the floor, although most would I believe have received unanimous or overwhelming approval. One called for a study "of forms of effective participation which truly representative (because elected) laymen should have in naming bishops, whenever possible by election." Another, initiated by the U.S. delegation, demanded truly representative councils of the laity, "the officers and members freely elected by the laity," at all national, diocesan and parish levels, as well as national and diocesan pastoral councils in which similarly elected laymen would sit with the clergy and religious.

In all this there was, interestingly

enough, no trace of lay-clerical tension. The priests were consistently with or ahead of the laymen in the demand for updating of structures. I frequently heard the comment that it was anomalous to call this assembly of Christians a "lay" congress.

I also thought significant the drafts calling for diversion of armaments funds to an integral development of the world, and describing "the liberal-capitalistic principles and practices of the so-called free world" as an obstacle for millions of people to live and progress in human dignity and as sons of God. While clearly in the spirit of Pope Paul's encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, this text goes further along a road Catholics have been slow to take.

My deepest memory is formed of two elements. The first was the witness of a young American delegate. In the United States, he said, at least 40 per cent of us are under 25, and the percentage in many countries is far higher. Here, delegates under 25 are a handful. "You are asking questions to which we have already given our own answers. When do we get to the questions for which we need answers? When can we express our very deep agony at the situation in the world?"

The second element was the outrage of the ever-young Dorothy Day when a Congress official rudely interrupted the young man before he could elaborate.