

# The Church In Our Day

(Continued from Page 1)

past a faithfulness to God and a service rendered to man which make us confident again.

Our is not, in any case, a Church of the past. Ours is always the Church of the present moment. Thus, we move with the "rhythm of the times."

## Neglect of Spiritual

With sadness we notice that some today, using the noble word "charism" or employing theology almost as therapy, ridicule the Church and, under the guise of being contemporary, seem hostile to everything except their own views. Too often (and here each of us much examine his conscience) the life of prayer and the pursuit of spiritual excellence have become the last and the least of considerations. A new Pelagianism seeks salvation in the correction of structures rather than in conversion to God; a new Gnosticism places all its hope in the apt phrase or the esoteric formula rather than in Jesus Christ crucified and risen. We must not forget that what we are seeking to reform is not a mortal institution but the Church of the Living God.

## Past, Present and Future in the Church

The Church is ultimately a Church of the future. We witness to Christ Jesus who is the same not only yesterday and today but forever (Heb. 13:8). We are one with the same Christ who proclaims: "Behold! I make all things new!" (Rev. 21:5). Our attitude toward the future is affirmative, not fearful. For one day in the future, known only to the Father, the Lord is destined to return to us.

The future does not, however, hold out its own inevitable solutions to our problems. Only those who labor to ransom the present are worthy to inherit the promises of the future. The Church we seek to become depends upon the Church we are today.

The Christian perspective is threefold. It looks to the past with reverence, to the present with responsibility, and to the future with faith, which is the substance of hope (Heb. 11:1).

## The Church in the face of Belief and Unbelief

There are two perplexing questions which especially trouble contemporary man. The first concerns whether God exists and if He does, what kind of a God He is — and what must be said of Him. The second is a problem for men who believe in God. It asks whether there need be a Church and what must be said of the Church. We discern an inevitable relationship between these two questions. No one who believes in God, is totally estranged from the Church. Conversely, everyone who truly belongs to the Church can never be far from God. For it is the Church which summons man to God and speaks of God to man. She is charged by the Spirit with a mission of witnessing to God by the power of her deeds (sacramental, social, sacrificial) and the suasion of her words. Because of this, the Church bears a certain responsibility for belief and unbelief in the world. She yearns to bring all believers into ever more complete communion with herself and all men into ever more conscious communion with God. She longs to do this not because she desires dominion but because there is no better way to serve man and to make him free.

## Ecumenism, Humanism, Education Are All Related to Church

Pope Paul VI, mindful of this centrality of the Church, refers "to the science of the Church, ecclesiology," as "the vivid need of our time" (address to general audience, April 27, 1966). The Church was "the principal question" studied by the council, "the center" of Vatican II's deliberations. "To know what the Church is," he declared, "becomes decisive in relation to so many other vital questions: the religious question first of all, the ecumenical question, the humanistic question."

Although we know the Church, unique among institutions, to be a mystery, still we must know, to some extent, what the Church is before we can say what she must do. The social or cultural, the educational, religious and ecumenical tasks we undertake depend upon our awareness of the nature and purpose of the Church as well as of our places in her life and action.

(To be continued next week)

# Convergence, Not Conversion, Seen Path to Unity

Christ's prayer "that all may be one" will echo through the Christian world next week.

"For all movements serving unity among Christians for bridge-builders of peace" the people will pray.

In this 60th year of an observance now called the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the emphasis is seen to be on convergence, not conversion. Separate denominations no longer are named in the prayers prepared by the Graymoor Fathers and the National Council of Churches.

The Week of Prayer extends from Jan. 18-25. Its history provides an index to the development of ecumenical attitudes between Roman Catholics and other Christians.

In 1908 the originators of the Christian Unity Octave knew with great precision what they were praying for. The small community of Anglican Franciscan Friars and Sisters who launched the observance at Graymoor, N.Y., prayed explicitly for the reunion of all Christians with the See of Rome. Less than two years later, the community was received into the Catholic Church as a group.

The week includes two days of highly symbolic value in the Catholic liturgical calendar. Until 1961, Jan. 18 marked the feast of the chair of St. Peter at Rome, an observance centered on an actual ancient chair believed by some to be, in the words of the old Catholic Encyclopedia, the "aethra" which the Apostle had used as presiding officer of the assembly of the faithful.

## Change of Title

Although "Church Unity Octave" was its formal title for many years, the Catholic week of prayer for Christian unity began in the 1920's to be called the "Chair of Unity Octave."

The name change was approved partly to distinguish the purpose of the observance from a similar week of prayer, held at Pentecost in Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant churches beginning in 1920. The Conference on Faith and Order, one of the movements which led to the formation of the World Council of Churches, sponsored this observance, whose dates were changed in 1940 to coincide with the Catholic week of prayer.

The feast of St. Peter's Chair was dropped from the Church calendar in 1961, when the

name became again "Chair of Unity Octave."

## New Impetus

The next major change came with the Second Vatican Council, for which Pope John XXIII announced his plans on the last day of the 1959 Unity Octave. The Council's decree on ecumenism, which encouraged Catholics to offer common prayers with other Christians for religious unity, gave the observance a new impetus and direction.

To many Catholic churchmen, undoubtedly, the idea of Christian unity is still based on the two points of conversion and acceptance of authority.

A similar basic attitude was reflected by Pope John XXIII in one of the first public statements of his pontificate: "We open our arms to all those separated from this Apostolic See. We ardently desire that they return to the house of a common Father."

In 1967, while he urged "great respect for the truly Christian values possessed" by non-Catholics, Pope Paul VI reiterated the theme of the papacy as the basis for Christian unity.

At first, these statements seem to say virtually the same thing, but Pope John has in his characteristic gesture of opening his arms in affection, not simply asserting authority. And Pope Paul, by putting in the small modifying phrase, "we believe," softens the absolute implications of his position. He has also pointedly and explicitly refrained from asking for a "return" or "conversion" of other Christians on several occasions when such a call would have been expected.

## New Attitudes

The three names which have been given to the week of prayer also imply varied underlying attitudes on unity. A new stage was reached when the Catholic Church accepted the World Council of Churches' title for the observance, "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity." The attitudes implied in this title have found their way rapidly into the Catholic observance of the week in the kinds of prayer said, their explicit purpose and the fact that Catholics in the last few years have prayed frequently in Protestant churches, and sometimes with Protestant ministers addressing them from Catholic pulpits.

While the "Chair of Unity Octave" implies unity through

allegiance to the papacy, and the alternative Catholic term, "Church Unity Octave," implies unity through a Church structure, the "Christian Unity" of the present name implies unity solely through common allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Before the Second Vatican Council, Catholics prayed for such intentions as "the return of separated Eastern Christians to the Holy See" (second day), "the reconciliation of Anglicans with the Holy See" (third day) and "that the Jewish people come into their inheritance in Jesus Christ" (seventh day). In 1964, the wording of the intentions was changed, omitting all references to the chair of Peter and the Holy See, so that the daily intentions became simple prayers for members of various Churches, not for their conversion.

## Denominations not Named

A further step was taken in 1965, when the Friars of the Atonement (Graymoor Fathers), the originators and Catholic sponsors of the observance, began to collaborate with the Faith and Order Department of the National Council of Churches in the preparation of the leaflet issued for the Week each year. At first, the prayers the leaflet continued to stress denominational differences, but the 1968 prayers have a new emphasis. No denominations are named this year. Instead, the following are typical prayer intentions: "For all movements serving unity among Christians and all men of goodwill . . . for Christians, that in acting and speaking they may present the Gospel as it is and not in a distorted form . . . for bridge-builders of peace between men, between races, and between nations."

These modifications reflect changing assumptions on what unity may mean and how it is to be achieved. They also reflect the development of the observance from prayer offered by Catholics seeking converts to prayer offered by Christians of many Churches seeking unity.

Development in this area has not been uniform, however. Father Ralph Thomas, S.A., assistant director of the Graymoor Ecumenical Institute, estimates that less than half of the Catholic dioceses of the United States presently include pulpits exchanges in their observance.

One diocese where the practice is developing rapidly is Brooklyn. In issuing instructions for this year, Msgr. Charles E. Divinye, chairman of the Diocesan Ecumenical Commission, noted that in 1967 an exchange of pulpits was permitted only by way of exception. For 1968, he said, such exchanges are recommended.

A Protestant minister's presence in a Catholic pulpit, he said, "would serve as a clear sign of unity in faith that already binds Christians together, even if imperfectly."

## Inter-Communion Studied

A logical next step after pulpits exchange is that of intercommunion, but this subject is being approached with great caution, not only by Catholics but by all Churches which have a Eucharistic liturgy. Several years of theological consideration may be expected before questions related to intercommunion are answered.

Meanwhile, changes that have taken place in the observance of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity have been welcomed. The number of public services during the week has increased significantly each year since Vatican II, as reflected in the distribution of the prayer leaflet. According

to Father Thomas, the distribution of the pamphlet for 1968 was three times the average annual figure.

The 60th annual week of prayer is observed by men of many Churches throughout the Christian world. Its objectives, accordingly, are less precisely defined and less readily attainable than was the merger of

the Graymoor community into the Catholic Church.

But though their objectives lie in the future, this year's participants know that they already enjoy one form of unity when they join their voices to echo the prayer of Jesus, "that they may all be one; as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee." (John 17: 21).

# Probing the Word

By FATHER ALBERT J. SHAMON

## The Wedding Feast at Cana

Perhaps one of the most enigmatic questions in the four Gospels is the remark made to His mother at Cana of Galilee. "They have no wine," she said. In answer, He asked, "Woman, why turn to me? My hour has not come yet."

Was Mary's remark a delicate hint they should leave? Her directive to the servants would indicate it was not.

Was Jesus' reply a rebuke, disrespectful, a show of lack of affection? It certainly was not! "Woman" was a title of respect. Emperors have called their queens by this name. Augustus thus addressed Cleopatra, "Take courage, woman." It was Jesus' normal and polite way of addressing women.

What is strange is the use of "woman" alone. No Hebrew son would ever address his mother by that word alone, without a qualifying adjective. Then why did Jesus do it? Certainly not to lessen the mother-son relationship. Your times in verses one to twelve, Mary is called the "mother of Jesus" (Jn. 2:1-12).

The most likely reason is that the title "woman" is symbolic. John never calls the mother of Jesus "Mary"; nor does Jesus ever address her as "mother." At two critical stages of His life, its beginning and its end, Jesus calls His mother "woman." At Cana, "Woman, why turn to me?" At Calvary, "Woman, this is your son."

Perhaps this was Jesus' way of identifying Mary as the new Eve and as the woman mentioned in Genesis 3:15. In Eden Eve led Adam to his first evil act; and, in consequence, God prophesied enmity between the woman and the serpent, and that her seed would crush the serpent. At Cana, Mary led the new Adam to his first glorious work; but there, the hour to crush the serpent had not come yet.

That came on Calvary. There, Jesus said to His mother, "Woman, this is your son." He did not mention the name of John, for John refers to one man, but son refers to all things living. In that hour, He—through whom whom all things were made—made His mother the "Mother of all the living," the new Eve.

Once Mary assumed this role as Eve, the new Adam handed over His "spirit" and the Church was born — "the woman clothed in the sun" of whom the woman Mary was but the type.

Devotion to Mary, therefore, cannot be something optional. Her role in redemption is as integral as Eve's was in the fall. Cana reveals not only the power of her intercession, but also her motherliness — her concern for others, even when unasked.

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# Summary of Bishops' Pastoral 'The Church in Our Day'

Following is the text of a summary prepared on the collective pastoral on "The Church in Our Day," issued by the bishops of the United States, Jan. 11, 1967.

This first collective pastoral letter of the bishops of the United States will be published Jan. 21, 1968. The following summary of the 22,000-word, 80-page booklet is prepared as a ready reference guide for the reader.

## I. Introductory Statement (para. 1-10)\*

\*These numbers refer to the paragraphs in the pastoral letter even though the printed version of the letter does not carry paragraph numbers.

In this first section the bishops tell us that the pastoral letter is their response to the demands of the times and that they share their thinking on the Church and some of the problems facing her with all of us as "brothers and sisters" and "sons and daughters." They also mention that there will possibly be similar pastoral letters on related conciliar themes in the future.

## II. Chapter One—The Mystery of the Church (para. 11-60)

After stressing the importance of the mystery of the Church as central to the entire body of Catholic doctrine, the bishops point out the twofold problem facing the men of our day, namely, the problem of God for unbelievers and the problem of the Church for believers (11-25).

They then pose the question, "What is the Church?" and discuss the question first in terms of her relationship to eternity, to the past, present and future, to man individually and collectively and finally to Christ Himself. Secondly, the bishops, following the example of Pope Paul, employ biblical images to illuminate the mystery of the Church and draw from these both spiritual and social implications for our country and our times (26-60).

## III. Chapter Two—The Structure of the Church (para. 61-225)

1. General Remarks on Visible Structure (61-85)
2. The Laity (86-103)
3. The Priesthood (104-151)
4. The Episcopacy (152-193)
5. Freedom and Authority (194-225)

### 1. The Visible Church

In the first five sections in this chapter the bishops discuss the essential visible structure of the Church. They point out the relationship between hidden grace and the visible Church, the harmony that should exist between the "charismatic" and "institutional" Church, and stress the need for a visible Church as "the sun and the sign" of all things that draw men to God.

### 2. The Laity

Turning their attention to the laity, the bishops first stress the sacramental character of the laity as members of the Church and then discuss the nature of consultation of the laity in doctrinal matters, especially emphasizing the genuine voice of the laity in what pertains to the faith. Several paragraphs are devoted to the type of witness expected of the laity in these days and, specifically, how that witness must be an authentic echo of the Church's teaching. Finally, the document mentions that a future pastoral letter will enter into a more thorough study of the apostolate, as apart from the doctrinal witness of the laity in the Church.

### 3. The Priesthood

This is one of the most sensitive and sympathetic parts of the pastoral letter. The bishops first recount the relationship of priests to the bishops, the work of renewal in the Church today and to the demands of the Church universal. The bishops recognize the present crisis in priestly life, making mention of its extent and suggesting some of its possible causes. They center this crisis in three specific problems, namely, the relevance of the priesthood in the present cultural crisis; the loneliness of the priest in a complex and confused society; the apartness of the priest by virtue of his sacramental ordination. A few words are said concerning the relationship of the priest to the laity and a warm tribute is given to the specific work of those in the religious life.

### 4. The Episcopacy

The pastoral letter then takes up the special position and ministry of bishops in the Church, applying in this case the previously mentioned distinctions concerning the charismatic and institutional elements. The principle of episcopal collegiality is stated and explained in light of the constant teaching of the Church, stressing the continuity of present teaching and action with the past. The relationship of

the individual bishop to the universal Church as a family is delineated, and the balancing role of the bishop between the universal and the local Church is explained.

In what is, perhaps, the most significant doctrinal development of the entire letter, the bishops examine at considerable length the "local Church," that is, the diocese. They explain how the principle of collegiality provides the link between the local and universal Church, how the local Church serves as a counterforce to the extreme impersonalism of modern society and how the local Church contains within itself all that is necessary for building up the Body of Christ among His members.

### 5. Freedom and Authority

The pastoral letter raises the question of the teaching authority of the bishops and then enters into a discussion of conscience, specifically in relation to the distinctions between natural and revealed religion. This section of the letter relies heavily upon Cardinal Newman's teaching on the subject.

The letter strikes a balance between the extremes of authoritarianism and libertarianism and shows how both authority and freedom complement each other in the Church. The final paragraphs of this chapter discuss infallibility within the Church and the requirement that all, hierarchy and laity, give "religious assent" to doctrine authentically set forth.

## IV. Concluding Reflections (para. 226-247)

"The Church is a sign to all the world that Jesus Christ still stands in our midst." With these words the bishops both summarize the entire spirit of the pastoral letter and at the same time offer a few concluding suggestions. They urge Catholics to be men of their times and bring God's grace to bear on the great issues of the day. They invite us, too, to meditate on God's Providence and not lose hope, for our faith in God and His Church will sustain us.

The bishops also present for our consideration and practice the attitudes that should mark every Catholic these days; namely, faith in the Church, gratitude, loyalty and love for the Church. Finally, they plead for all to follow the teachings of the council and promise to all who are loyal to such that the Church will lead us to our home, "where Christ shall appear and . . . the glory of God will light up the heavenly city."

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Vol. 79 - No. 15



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# Fr. Knapp Latin Am

For the past 6 1/2 years, Fr. Thomas Knapp, O.F.M., 35, a Franciscan priest from Rochester has been conducting a person to person peace mission amongst the Indians in two Latin American countries.

After a 6 year tour of duty in Bolivia and a 6 months stint in Arico, Chile, Father Knapp was home for the holidays to visit his mother, Mrs. James Knapp, of Washington, D.C., his brother, James, Esq. Dr., and a sister, Mrs. Robert Horton of Fairhill Dr. At present Father



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Father