

The Holy Hour: An Open Secret To Progress in Prayer

(Bishop Sheen Continues His "Open Letter to Seminarians")

Concentrate Prayer in a Holy Hour

May I ask, that every day of your life in addition to your Holy Mass you respond to the question of Our Lord: "Can you not spend one hour with Me?", and you do it before His Eucharistic presence?

The Holy Hour is a personal prayer. The Mass and the Breviary are official prayers. They belong to the Mystical Body of Christ. They do not belong to us personally. The priest who limits himself strictly to his official obligation and adoration, is like the union man who lays down his tools the moment the whistle-blow. Love begins when duty finishes. It is a giving of the cloak when the coat is taken. It is walking the extra mile.

Of course, we do not have to make a Holy Hour — and that is just the point. Love is never compelled, except in hell. There is no one to submit to justice. To be forced to love would be a kind of hell, and no priest who loves the Sacred Heart ever has to give an engagement hour.

"Would you, too, go away?" (John 6:68) is weak love; "Art thou sleeping?" (Mark 14:37) is irresponsible love; "He had great possessions" (Matthew 19:22; Mark 10:22) is selfish love. But does the priest who loves His Lord have time for other activities before he performs acts of love above and beyond the call of duty?

If the Lord had not given us a vocation, what would we be? Insurance clerks, truck drivers, school teachers, doctors, farmers, waiters? The Lord did not choose any of us because we were the best He could find. He picks "frail vessels." And as we gather together around the Eucharist and look at each other, we recognize in our hearts the truth of Paul's words:

Consider the circumstances of your own calling; not many of you are wise, in the world's fashion, not many powerful, not many well born. (1 Cor. 1:26)

We are not the best, otherwise the power of the Gospel would be in us, rather than in the Spirit. But where is this truth better learned than in the presence of the Mystery which seems bread, but is actually Emmanuel; it is so small that our hands can break it, and yet so full of power that its breaking renews the Passion and Death of Christ?

The deceased or the de-gottized priest is the increased Christ. When the Eucharist is no more than a remote background to our lives, it is like having the sun low on the horizon behind us. We cast a shadow forward, and the lower the sun, the longer the shadow. If the Lord is far from us, scarcely visible, our own ego seems to grow important like our shadow, and with it our opinions and works take on the appearance of great substance. But this is an illusion. If, on the contrary, each day begins with the Eucharist before us as our rising sun, the shadow of the ego no longer hides our true face, and when the Sun of Justice reaches the meridian, no ego survives. Then the souls whom we tend, like the apostles at the Transfiguration, see "no one any more, but Jesus only with them" (Mark 9:7).

The sole requirement for the Holy Hour is the venture of faith, and the reward is the depths of intimacy for those who cultivate His

friendship. To abide with Christ is spiritual fellowship, as He insisted on the solemn and sacred night of the Last Supper, the moment He chose to give us the Eucharist:

You have only to live on in Me, and I will live on in you. (John 15:4)

He wants us in His dwelling:

That you too, may be where I am. (John 14:3)

How far we miss the joys of our priesthood, when our only meetings with the Lord are "public audiences" — at Mass, devotions, stations of the Cross, whenever we have to be there. The Lord wants "private audiences." He wants a protracted audience, a full hour. John and Andrew stayed the entire day! "Blessed are they who listen to me, keep vigil, day by day, at my threshold, watching till I open my doors." (Prov. 8/34) Our crosses are daily, not weekly, not monthly and so should be our appeal for strength: "If any man has a mind to come My way" (Prov. 9/23)

The daily crosses of our life will sour us, burn our souls and make us bitter if we do not turn them into crucifixes. But how can this be done unless we see that they come from the Lord?

May we not be certain that if we begin a Holy Hour every day as a seminarian and continue it as a priest that the Judge will welcome us, as a Friend, when the temporal side of our priesthood is finished. If our Lord puts the day and the hour together to make it a symbol of judgment, then shall we not put the day and hour unto salvation and unto love: (Mass 12/4/3)

It may be objected that the hour taken out of the day could be much better used in the world; that same objection was made to Paul's imprisonment. Yet from his prison St. Paul wrote to the Philippians to reassure them that if he was not actively preaching he was still doing good. Each priest in his Holy Hour can say as Paul in prison:

The things that happened to me have actually been a help to the Good News. My chains in Christ have become famous not only all over the Praetorium but everywhere, and most of the brothers have taken courage in the Lord from these chains of mine, and are getting more and more daring in announcing the message." (Phil. 1:12-14)

In conclusion, it will be found that those who give up the priesthood have already given up wrestling in prayer. Intense, prayer keeps our heart open to the inflow of Divine Love, so that every action of our days is covered by that gathering tide. We cannot talk to our people about another world, unless we are as men who have been in that world. Nietzsche said: "How deep can you expect me to believe in a Redeemer if you do not act as if you have been redeemed."

Choose the same time each day for the Holy Hour in order that it may become a pattern of life. One cannot overestimate the quiet strength of the early morning devotions. It is the Nazareth before the ministry. Late rising saps the calm strength of morning devotions; it sends us off hurried and unequipped with the sense of hav-

ing been already worsted in an encounter with the unknown battles of the untried days.

Evening prayer is the other great fortress when the disciple may come to Jesus in the Holy Hour and tell Him what he has done. It is the deathbed of a day with its own confession of sin and its own commending of the soul to God.

We will do enough preaching to others during our lives. But we must preface it by preaching a sermon to ourselves in meditation. But let it be a continuous hour spent in the presence of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Medicine taken only once a week can give little strength. As Aristotle put it, "that which has become habitual is part of our nature." The daily manna in the desert teaches us daily the lesson of dependence on God. What the Lord gives daily, we can return daily.

The Eucharist is like to a magnetic field in the science of physics; it is the source of special illumination and strength. "Blessed are they who listen to Me, keep vigil, day by day, at My threshold, watching till I open My doors." (Prov. 8/34)

Conclusion

Many more reflections I could give about prayer, but I tell you that you will preach better, have more influence over souls, be more loved by those in the fold and those outside, be more receptive to crosses, if you daily make a Holy Hour. Never miss, regardless of travel, the pressure of duties or fatigue.

Learn that prayer is a double identification: first, with the will of God and second, with the plight of men. If we accept both to the breaking point there will be a Cross in our life which will be a pledge of glory. Regardless of how difficult the Holy Hour is; despite your fatigue and even your prayerlessness, stay with it and say: —

"Lord, I am tired. I can bring to Thee Only a heavy weight of tiredness. I kneel, but all my mind's a vacancy: And conscious only of its weakness — Can it be prayer, this dragging dreariness? 'The effectual fervent prayer avails' Wrote downright James; 'and here inert kneel-I; I would feel fervent, but the effort fails' Like some starved mendicant, too weak to cry His need, I wait — perchance Thou wilt pass by."

Please take these words to heart. Unless we love the Lord in silence, we cannot love Him in noise. When the Greeks came to Philip with the request: "Sir, we would see Jesus". Our Lord at once began to speak of His death. (John 12/20-24) It was not by teaching men but by dying for them that He could draw all men to Himself. (John 12/32) It is by dying to our ego and self-will and license in the death of our daily Holy Hour that we will refresh ourselves: "The outward man does indeed suffer wear and tear, but every day the inward man receives fresh strength." (2 Cor. 4/16)

Layman College

New York City—Dr. Margaret Kelly, Dean for Academic Development, St. John's University, Brooklyn, was elected president of the Conference of Catholic Colleges and Universities of New York State at the annual meeting of the conference here last Saturday, (Feb. 24) succeeding Very Rev. Charles J. Lavery, C.S.B., president of St. John Fisher College, Rochester, who had held the position since 1966.

Dr. Kelly is the first president to lead the Conference. Another layman, Dr. Paul Buchanan, vice president of administration, D'Youville College, Buffalo, was elected secretary-treasurer.

The theme of the Conference was "Catholic Higher Education: 1968-78—Catholic or catholic?" Keynote addresses were given by Dr. Manning Pattillo, president of the Foundation Library Center, New York City, who spoke on "The Public Role of Catholic Higher Education," and by Father Neil McClusky, S.J., office of research in education, University of Notre Dame, whose talk was titled "Catholic Higher Education: Formula for Survival."

Pointing out that the Second Vatican Council changed the climate of Catholic education, bringing new freedom and a ferment, Dr. Pattillo offered four challenges that Catholic higher education must meet if it is to survive and perform its important public function. These are:

1. A Catholic college must see to it that its students gain a clear understanding of essential ideas and facts of Christian faith.
2. A Catholic college should make sure that its students master the intellectual skills of writing, reading, speaking, and critical thinking to the point of advanced proficiency.

Or



By FATHER ROBERT McNAMARA

N.B. This is another of incidental articles of Father McNamara on aspects of Rochester Diocesan history. A main theme in the commemoration of current centennial year of Diocese will be the publication of his 700-page history, "Diocese of Rochester, 1840-1968." The book will appear in the end of Lent, with the watching the columns of Courier-Journal for further details.

"On you the unfortunate depends; of the fatherless are the helper." So the Psalm praises God. Those who serve God imitate Him in this respect in showing charity to the orphan and especially to orphans.

The Diocese of Rochester has a long, and surprisingly extensive record of orphan-care begins in the 1840s, before Diocese was even established continues to the present day.

The first orphanage set up in the twelve counties of the Diocese was St. Patrick's Orphan Asylum. It opened the shadow of St. Patrick's Church, Rochester, on July 1842, with twenty-four girls. Actually, this institution was the culmination of a project that had been in planning for some six years.

At the start, the two little orphans were supervised by a lay foster parent. But the fostering board desired to have assume the direction. In the founding board (Father Bernard O'Reilly, the priest, Father Charles French, and Messrs. George Wilkin, Patrick Barry), approached Sisters of Charity of Baltimore, Md. with the invitation to take over the Rochester Asylum.

The Sisters consented, and April 1845, four Sisters arrived in Rochester. They not only the first nuns to establish themselves in Rochester, they were the first sisters in any order to undertake a mission in all western New State.

The Sisters of Charity were in charge of St. Patrick's Asylum until 1870, when Bishop McQuaid withdrew it from jurisdiction and entrusted



Help For Innocent Victims

Conflicts that flare between nations result mostly in more suffering and misery for the innocent young. The two youngsters in the photo were separated from their parents during flight from Red China to Hong Kong. Catholic Relief Services helps place these homeless unfortunates. Your support for the 1968 Bishops' Overseas Aid Fund Appeal, March 17-24, will help continue such works of mercy.

The Church in Our Day

(Today's installment of the American Bishops' Collective Pastoral, "The Church in Our Day," deals with the question of salvation related to the Church, and with the idea of "Catholicity" in the Church.)

Does There Still Remain Only One Way of Salvation?

In any case, Christians reject the notion that there are many divergent ways to salvation, ways which bypass the Church and yet arrive in Christ or ways which turn aside from even Christ, who is the only Way (John 14:6), and yet result in God. The formulations of the theology of salvation which we have cited are more subtle than we may have appreciated; they are not, however, any less valid today than in the past.

When one has found Christ and come into the Church, he has discovered not one of many equal ways to salvation. He has become one through grace with the one Christ in Whom every effort at salvation, whether his name be known or not, begins and ends; he has done this within the one Church to which all grace is oriented and through which the grace of Christ is uniquely communicated to God's children.

When one comes into the visible Church, he has followed the path, along which men seek salvation, to its destination.

What Is Meant by Brotherhood of Man and Fatherhood of God?

In the Church of Christ, men find God; they are, however, still called to explore ever more fully His infinite mystery. In our continued search within the Church we enjoy the security of those who are at home and who know the Master of the house. Many of God's people are not yet in the Church of Christ, as He Himself reminds us. We look forward to the day when, together with all who seek God, we can continue even more closely to search out the mystery of the brotherhood by which and in which we are saved under the Fatherhood of God.

Are There Other Marks of the Church Than Visibility and Unity?

The Church of Christ is not only visible. It is also Catholic in every sense of the word. It provides for differences, but it has no vertical or horizontal lines of division. It has, for example, no vertical lines of division essentially separating conservatives and liberals, nor horizontal lines so dividing generations within the Church into young and old or

ministries within the Church into clergy and laity as to pit these one against another. There is no "coming great Church" that is not already present in the world, having come to us across the centuries from the first Pentecost and the primitive Christian community; the Church as it yet may be, however different its style or developed its structures, will be the tree essentially present when first the mustard seed began to sprout; the Church in every stage of its maturity was present in that tiny seed.

Does Catholicity Transcend Time and Space?

In no essential sense can the Church be constricted within a contemporary Church, a futuristic Church, a traditionalist Church, or a Church of the past. A Church monopolized by any group or reserved to any one period or comfortable in any single culture would run counter to the pluralities recognized and demanded by Vatican II and would, in effect, become that monolithic, uncatholic institution which the partisans of each special group or tendency profess to reject.

What baffles most is the neglect of Scripture and history by some who, professing to seek or even to perfect the Church, seem disinclined to recognize what Christ intended the Church to be. There are others who measure the Church exclusively in terms of social effectiveness, of cultural conformity, or of whatever efficiency most appeals to their special interest; some speak only of relevancy to those values of the world which they cherish, or of suitability to the temper of the times. These things, many good in themselves, are hardly adequate norms for evaluating the open, eternal transcendent, human yet divine Church of God. If one seeks confirmation of this, let him ponder how Jesus Christ would fare if He were measured only in terms of the historical effect of His preaching or by the secular relevancy or suitability of His Person to His times.

How Does the False Charge of the Irrelevance of the Church Arise?

If one makes use of only such norms as these, the Church will always be "irrelevant." This must not discourage those who labor for reform or renewal. It is merely a reminder of what we are about. There are those who are frustrated because they cannot fully explain the Church or her activity in a vocabulary which the world can fully comprehend, forgetting that today, as always, both Christ and His Church remain foolishness for some, a stumbling block to others (1 Cor. 1:23).

(Continued Next Week)

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Edmonton Story: Updating at Twenty Below

By GARY MACDONALD

Edmonton, Alberta. I find myself in what the guide book tells me is "the most northern city of any consequence" on the North American continent. If it's colder farther north, I'm kind of reconciled to passing up the outposts in the Yukon and Alaska. It's twenty below outside, and two minutes of that brings tears to the eyes and a numbness to the lungs of one who only recently was basking under the Caribbean sun.

The pioneer blood still pulses warm, however, as I discovered when I attended the first of a series of public lectures and discussions entitled "Operation Renewal '68." When every one of the 800 seats in the school auditorium was filled, they packed 50 more on the stage with folding chairs, and still an overflow stood at the back for two hours.

Operation Renewal, I should explain, is the program of the Archdiocese of Edmonton to involve its 135,000 Catholics,

a quarter of the population, in updating the Church in the spirit of Vatican II.

It started two years ago as a series of 13 lectures, each delivered at two centers (Edmonton and Calgary), sponsored by the Western Catholic Reporter and the diocesan Information Centers. It was a quick survey of what the Council had done. A year ago, in nine more lectures at the same two centers, the program zeroed in on the Christian in today's world.

This year, there are several changes. For one, the Edmonton Senate of Priests has joined as sponsor. It didn't exist two years ago. For another, each lecture is being repeated at five centers. In addition, reflecting the success already achieved in involvement of a wide public, the format is significantly changed.

The course was preceded by a program of training of discussion leaders. The format talks have been cut to four, spaced at two-week intervals. In the alternate weeks,

the people will assemble to discuss the previous week's talk and draw the concrete conclusions applicable to their own situation.

Archbishop Anthony Jordan, OMI, was on the platform at Edmonton, 125 miles west of here (31 below) on the opening afternoon. He was on the platform at Edmonton for the same talk the second night, and on successive nights at the other locations.

The talk by Grant Maxwell, a former newsmen from nearby (in the micro-cosmic terms of the prairies) Saskatoon and a Canadian delegate to last October's Lay Congress, was excellent, yet to come to it five times in this weather suggested a gluttonous appetite for punishment.

The archbishop had two good reasons, however, the one spelled-out-by-him-in a brief but vigorous introduction, the other in informed surmise on my part. The surmised reason: he wanted to ensure a solid turnout of his priests some of

whom have mixed feelings about the faithful. The other reason: he wanted to let clergy and laity alike understand that he expected one concrete result from this year's discussion—a parish council in every parish in the archdiocese.

Archbishop Jordan did not, on the record, play a major part at the Vatican Council. He spoke only once, though it is noteworthy that he then stressed "constant" and trusting dialogue, both within the Church, between clergy and laity, and between the Church and all men. His subsequent actions and present stance show that he meant what he said.

Some with whom I spoke after the lecture are impatient with the rate of progress. My own reaction is more positive. Edmonton is a new, oil-rich city, the Houston of Canada, not the most propitious climate for conciliar renewal. Yet, from what I have seen, it may be entitled to extend to other spheres its claim to be "the fastest growing city in North America."