



Around The World

485 Million Catholics, Vatican Reports

Vatican City—(NC)—The Holy See, in a pre-publication view of its annual report, put the number of the world's Catholics at 485 million in 1966, about 5.5 million more than in 1964.

Other statistics for 1966 gave the number of priests as 351,624, up almost 5,000 from two years previously. There were 1225 dioceses, 13 more than in 1964.

"Christ the Worker" Draws Factory Pay

Madrid—(RNS)—Each payday at a large factory in Madrid one pay envelope is marked with the name of Christ. The envelope is handed to Father Aparicio Mas, pastor of Concepcion church in a Madrid working class district. The salary is used for two schools, a home for the aged, and a home for children.

Five years ago the priest visited the factory's top director, seeking work for "someone I can recommend." The director was hesitant to hire an employee sight unseen.

Finally the priest admitted the person for whom he sought work was Christ. "I had started various parish projects and I wanted them to be named for Christ the Worker. His salary would be used to support them."

Christ the Worker is still drawing his salary in Madrid.

Bishop Decries Unemployment "Scandal"

Angers, France—(NC)—"Unemployment is a kind of scandal," Bishop Henri Mazerat of Angers said here.

Speaking in the cathedral, the bishop declared that there was a Christian duty to insure that all men might earn a living. He called on local officials and factory owners to collaborate in this.

Meanwhile, the Council of the Workers' Mission in Paris issued a statement calling for greater sympathy on the part of Catholics for the unemployed in order that they may find in the Church a means of renewing their hopes.

Peace Service to Close Olympics

Mexico City—(RNS)—A special service of prayer for world peace will be held at the conclusion of the Olympic Games next October. Two chapels being built on the Olympic grounds will be available for religious services of all denominations, the planning commission announced.

Archbishop Miguel Dario Miranda y Gomez of Mexico City has arranged also to make Catholic churches available for non-Catholic services.

First Communion Before Confession

Ayr, Scotland—(NC)—The Galloway diocese has announced that in the future children will make their first Communion before their first confession.

This is the first British diocese to take this step. First confession will be made at about the age of nine instead of the usual age of seven, Bishop Joseph McGee of Galloway decided.

Bishop Chides Spain's "Lax" Society

Malaga, Spain—(NC)—Spanish society shows a moral laxity that "makes it difficult to consider" Spain a Christian country, Bishop Emilio Benavent of Malaga said here.

"Love of truth, respect for justice and true charity are so rare in Spain; how can we consider ourselves Christian in such a society?" the bishop asked in a sermon in the cathedral.

He denounced "moral laxity in business, where there is not the slightest concern for anything except maximum profit obtained in ways that increase unemployment and dilute our national resources." He cited "frequent scandals" in society that "separate the poor and workers from God and the Church."

Probing the Word

By FATHER ALBERT J. SHAMON

Transfiguration

(Second Sunday of Lent)

Many a time in class, I have told my students, "Don't let your study interfere with your education." Sometimes saying prayers can get in the way of real praying. Prayer is not the same as saying prayers.

After Peter had confessed that Christ was the Son of the living God, Jesus went up to a high mountain "to pray," wrote St. Luke, not just to say prayers. Here He was transfigured. What prayer can do!

There are all kinds of definitions of prayer. "A conversation with God." "The expression of desire." "Being present before God in some way, in mind or heart." They are all good definitions.

However, I like to say prayer is the opening of the soul to the inflowing of God. It is like pulling up the shade to let the sun shine into a room.

The soul gets a new vision of God and of self. To be there is so good, because the vision transfigures the soul.

Peter, James and John came down from Tabor changed men. In the mountain quiet, focussing on Jesus alone and open to his influence, they unsealed their eyes and beheld his as He really was all the time.

They were changed too in their attitude to the moment of glory. They were not to stay on the mountain—the meteoric vision of glory was given only to enable them to walk the way of the cross. If prayer does not change us, then there is something wrong with it.

The invisible God becomes visible to the soul that prays, transfiguring it. We come weighted down with burdens, crushed under mountains of care, resentment, obsession and fear. Never could we lift them, never free ourselves. But then —

We kneel, and all around us seem to lower;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear;
We kneel how weak, we rise how full of power.

All we need do is take time out — the time we gladly devote to movies, football games, plays. God insists that we take the time, that we sit in Church for a time or hide away in our room for an hour — with the Gospels.

Bit by bit in the hush, our eyes will be opened and we'll start seeing Him and ourselves very clearly. We'll discover what we're hiding. We'll hear what He's saying. We'll see what He expects of us. His face will become radiant and we'll cry out, as have so many others, "It's good to be with you! Let it never pass! Let's pitch three tents here and stay forever!"



Ecumenical Progress

New York — (RNS) — Father Edward J. Gorry, C.S.P., public relations director for the Paulist Fathers (left), is welcomed as the first Catholic priest member of the New York Chapter of the Religious Public Relations Council. He is being greeted by Dr. Marvin Wilbur, the council's national executive secretary. The council was started in 1929 as an organization of publicists for denominational and inter-Church groups. It now has Catholic religious and lay members.

Cardinal Suenens

God Is Alive But Hidden

Oakland, Calif.—(NC)—The God of modern man is a living God and a hidden God who is to be found in the human relationships of modern man himself, Leo J. Cardinal Suenens of Malines-Brussels, Belgium, told an audience at the First Presbyterian Church in Berkeley.

The cardinal was here to give the Earl Lectures sponsored by the Pacific School of Religion. He spoke on "A New Approach to God," the first of three talks. Today's problem, the cardinal told his audience, is not so much a question of God's existence but a feeling that God and man are no longer together, that there is an antagonism between them. Consequently the man who is "with God" is seen as being "against mankind and the modern world."

The question is not the negation of God but the affirmation of man, the cardinal said, referring to words of French theologian Yves Congar. "We are confronted with a dilemma of God or man when the answer has to be God and man," the cardinal said. Such an answer, he explained, calls for a new approach that departs from the traditional philosophical approaches to God and reaches Him instead by negation—seeing Him first for what He is not.

"We have to take away the false images of God, that we have thought about God in a simplistic way. That is number one," the cardinal said.

With the false images stripped away, God is then realized as a hidden God who can never be expressed in all His essence, a God whom we are "always approaching and at the same time not approaching," he said.

"We are compelled to attempt what is unattainable, to climb where we cannot reach, to speak what we cannot utter," the cardinal continued, quoting the words of St. Hilary of Poitiers. "Instead of the bare adoration of faith, we are compelled

to entrust the deep things of religion to the perils of human expression."

To express belief in this hidden God, he continued, means that faith also must first be defined in terms of what it is not. "Faith is not the reasoning of intellectualism, nor the inquiry of scientific study," he said.

"Faith is a commitment of all my being to a living God. It is a commitment with all my personality, with all my existence—an engagement of all my being to the living God."

The difference between faith as believing in a real person—Christ—and faith falsely seen as a catalogue of truths explains in part the difficulties of the Dutch Catechism, he said. "Catechism questions and answers are not faith. A lot of the trouble of the book is due to its title. People are expecting a book with questions and answers and that is not the way the book is written."

The new approach to God, Cardinal Suenens said, is found in two ways: by analyzing human relationships themselves and by realizing Christ's relationship to humanity.

"We find God in analyzing what human relationships are. Why am I obliged to respect you? You are a very contingent creature like myself. Why should I be obliged to respect you, to practice justice toward you, to revise my own life?"

"Because there is something more than you in you," he answered.

The second part of this approach to God is through the person of Christ who, by being God and man at the same time, is the "final word" why the human person should be respected. "If you meet a person who is at the same time God and man, you have the final reason for respect for man," the cardinal asserted.

This start from humanity to Christ, he said, then leads to the Father and His eternal love for man and to the Holy Spirit.

Abortion Bill Dead In Virginia, But Not Georgia

The sponsor of a bill to revise Virginia's 119-year-old anti-abortion law withdrew his measure, and instead proposed a two-year study of alternatives.

But the Georgia Legislature passed and sent to Gov. Lester Maddox a bill which would make the state the nation's fourth to allow therapeutic abortions.

These actions highlighted a week of debate, which also saw the chief backer of a related abortion law for Delaware agree to incorporate some restrictions proposed by a Catholic priest.

The Virginia bill was sponsored by Delegate Wallace G. Dickson. Originally, it would have wiped all anti-abortion statutes from the books, leaving the question of whether to perform an abortion wholly in the hands of doctors.

But on the day public hearings were to begin, Dickson introduced a substitute measure, similar to laws in effect in California, Colorado and North Carolina.

The substitute measure would permit abortions to preserve the mental or physical health

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superbly styled
coats for Spring

The "look" for Spring '68 is here, now, at Sibley's! See it embodied in our rainbow selection of soft pastel coats, two of which we show. Featured is a double-breasted wool and nylon basketweave with bright gold button, notched collar and slashed flapped pockets. Pleated and buckle-belted for back interest, it's available in a lush pimento or subdued celery. The loop and button side-closing coat is of textured wool and nylon, has a unique double-banded stand-up neck, line and slash pockets. In white or aqua. Either coat, sizes 8-16, \$45. Sibley's Career Coats, Second Floor, Southtown, Greece

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