

Pope Pays a Bitter Price

By BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN

He who has a mission to mankind for good, suffers. He who has no mission, talks.

"Poor little talkative Christianity!" a character exclaims in a novel by E. M. Forster. Even the word "theology" means "talk about God."

Dialogue is for discussion: decision implies suffering. All great men who have "been sent" have become as sponges to soak up evil in silence. "God's weakness is stronger than human strength" (1 Cor. 1/25). He who bids mankind to walk in an opposite direction to the precipice where millions tumble, seems to have lost his head. But such neurotic hostility is to the man with a Mission a sign that God is with him. To him, as William Blake put it:

"A tear is an intellectual thing,
And a sigh is the Sword of an Angel King,
And the bitter groan of a Martyr's woe
Is an arrow from the Almighty's bow"

Suffering was the lot of Christ on a Mission from the Heavenly Father. "This was the way God carried out what He had foretold, when He said through all His prophets that His Christ would suffer" (Acts 3/18).

The very moment God called the Apostle Paul to preach to the Gentiles, the Glorified Christ in heaven announced: "I Myself will show him how much he must suffer for My Name" (Act 9/16). And He did! When the Lord puts in the knife to make men's work redemptive, it festers into "troubles, worries, persecutions and attacks" (Rom. 8/35).

Shall it be any different with our Holy Father who has taken the name of the Apostle of the Gentiles, and as we believe, completed one of the stages leading to the Final Epiphany, or the appearing of Christ in His Glory? He is the first Pope in twenty centuries to "preach the Gospel to all nations". With his namesake, Pope Paul VI can say: "I proclaim Jesus Christ, the revelation of a mystery kept for endless ages, but now so clear that it must be broadcast to pagans everywhere" (Rom. 16/26).

A moment in history has ended. Humanity has turned a page. Act I of the Drama, or the preaching to the Jews, was done by the Lord Himself; Act II, or the Proclamation of the Kingdom of God to all nations, has been fulfilled by Pope Paul. If the Mission of Christ ended in a crucifixion, if the Mission of St. Paul ended in a beheading, shall the end of one mission and the beginning of another not be for Paul, VI a Dry Martyrdom—not shedding blood as in a Wet Martyrdom, but dying a thousand deaths at the hands of "so-called brethren" (2 Cor. 11/20)? As the apostle Paul was accused of causing "havoc in Jerusalem", so Pope Paul is accused of causing "havoc in Rome". What vomited hatred against Paul was the letter Humanae Vitae proclaiming the continuity of Love and Life.

Throughout history, the authority of the Pope and the Church was challenged in high doctrinal matters such as the Divinity of Christ, the union of His Godhead and human nature, and the Trinity. But in this twentieth century, the attack comes not from the speculative intellect, but from morals and the area of sex. In these days when geneticists and others recommend birth outside the mother's womb, it is indeed interesting that the greatest defender of sex is a celibate Pope.

The Gospel of the Lord was basically an affirmation that Love and Life should have uninterrupted transmission. Christ Who is God's Love in the flesh, came that we might have Life. The message of Pope Paul was essentially the message of Christ: Love must be open to Life. But the "conscience" of some revolted, saying: "Love must not end in life. It must be stopped; it must be plugged up, dammed, barricaded, throttled, harassed, deadlocked and gagged."

The best way to stop Divine Love giving Life was mechanical and technological, that is with a hammer, a few nails, a lance and cross beams. The Love-control worked. It did not end in Life. It ended in a messy frustration, in a bruised and battered face, bright blood trickling down through matted hair, metallic flies crawling and swarming on the mouth and everywhere. Love was successfully interrupted.

That Divine Marriage of Divinity and Humanity was turned into a sadistic, psychopathic, depraved and perhaps erotic holiday. Love never got through. Beaudelaire said that love sits on a skull. That is where it rested on Calvary, for it ended in death.

The Holy Father's message was the same as the Incarnation: let Love take its course. If you pick up a violin and bow, let there be music; if you touch chisel to marble, let there be a statue; if the farmer plants seed, let him not uproot it, otherwise he shall become frustrated at harvest time.

Betrayal From Within

Our Lord's view was that if an enemy had betrayed Him, He could have borne it. What makes it hard for Pope Paul is that He is betrayed by those who break bread with Him. With St. Paul, he may say: "I am in danger from my own people." There is nothing unexpected about that; if Satan himself goes disguised as an angel of light, there is no need to be surprised when his servants, too, disguise themselves as the servants of righteousness. These people are counterfeit apostles, they are dishonest workmen disguised as apostles of Christ (1 Cor. 11/13-15, 26). It was only one who was traded in the sacred associations of the Church, Judas, who knew where to find Christ after dark. Knowing too, that Divinity is so sacred, he prefaced the betrayal by pretending oneness by blistering His lips with a kiss.

Pope Paul, who witnesses to Christ's Name, must expect to bear His Cross; he who does most for Christ, must suffer most for Him. Pius IX (1846-1878) was the last Pope who had to flee from Rome. Before him, Pius VII (1800-1823) was carried as a prisoner to France. But Paul is allowed to stay in Rome. Thanks to the new media of communication, the darts can find him there.

Everything he does scandalizes some of his own. With the Savior, he may repeat the words uttered

as He went into the garden: "You will all lose faith in Me this night, for the Scripture says I shall strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered" (Matt. 26/31). Those on the right are scandalized, because he goes into the world; those on the left are scandalized, because he does not become worldly.

Dr. Albert C. Outler, Professor of Theology at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, speaking on Pope Paul's sorrow, observes: "The impatient retort that what he does is too little and too late, is itself a sign of the utopian self-righteousness that believes that whatever is desirable (freedom, peace, the new Jerusalem!) is therefore available NOW. Instant eschatology! — the same mood that smears all caution with the label of blind reaction. But tell me of another Pope more deeply aware of the complexities of the current revolution, or more dogged in his own pattern of reform without ruin. That Paul VI should therefore be crucified by both diehards and arsonists, and pilloried by his perfectionist critics, will one day stand as a sin against truth and charity."

Curtains are rung down on dramas, flowers wither and youth wrinkles, but Calvary never ends. Christ is in agony until the end of time. In every dimension of life, the family, the nation, the parish, the diocese, the Church, there must be someone taking the place of Christ Crucified for His defense of the spiritual. The foot that is bruised by a stone becomes conscious of pain only when the nerves telegraph it to the brain.

Calvary is reproduced in every parent who has ever become identified with the wandering and erring child. The wayward daughter knows not the time of her visitation of grace, but in a mother's heart there are tears that well up as Christ wept over Jerusalem. The shame of the child is the mother's shame. The heart of the child is not yet ready to break, but the mother's heart has already broken, and her penitent anguish is in direct proportion to her holiness.

So in the Church, there is no defection from the Gospel, no acceptance of the moods of the world which are at enmity with God, but that the agony is registered in some head who senses responsibility for others.

When Saul, the future Paul, persecuted the Church, Glorified Christ in heaven questioned: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9/5). How could Saul re-crucify Christ Who had risen from the dead, and was now at the right hand of the Father? If someone pierces the toe, does not the head complain? Saul was using the sword against the Body of Christ, the Church, and the Invisible Head protested: "I am Jesus, and you are persecuting Me" (Acts 9/6).

Christ is still feeling every thorn of pride, every nail of avarice, every thrust of wayward love. Laurence Housman wrote:

"While Earth wears wounds, still must
Christ's wounds remain,
Whom Love made Life and of Whom Life
made Pain,
And of Whom Pain made Death—
No breath,
Without Him, sorrow draws; no feet
Wax weary, and no hands hard labor bear,
But He doth wear
The travail and the heat:
Also, for all things perishing, He saith,
'My grief, My pain, My Death.'"

On this earth, too, all agonies of the Church, or the Body of Christ register in its visible Head, Pope Paul VI. They would do so anyway, for what father does not grieve for prodigals? But, in these times, he must be tormented more, because as the Epiphany Pope, He brings to an end the Time of Nations; he inaugurates a new era in whose remote future is the coming of Christ in the glorious Epiphany.

He who fulfills a Divine Mission suffers. Our Lord, in the fulfillment of His Father's Mission, had to be the "Suffering Servant": "There is a baptism I must receive, and how great is my distress till it is over" (Luke 12/50). St. Paul had to suffer so that "nothing can come between us and love of Christ" (Rom. 8/35). Paul VI, in completing the promise of the Lord that all nations must hear the Gospel, must also feel the nails and thorns and bitter scorns.

It Happened Before

A parallel exists between the way some of the faithful treat their Shepherd, and the way some of the Israelites treated Moses. We are a pilgrim people, whether we belong to the Old, or the New Testament. The Vatican Council spoke of the Church as a "pilgrim people" being led across the desert of time to the Promised Land. The leadership of this Pilgrim Church is today challenged, as was the leadership of Moses. The attack seems to center on the source of power. While Our Lord answered: "You would not have the power unless it were given to you from above" (John 19/11), today too many of the faithful operate on the opposite code: "You would not have the power unless it were given to you from below". Freud, Marx and Marcuse have convinced too many that the sub-conscious id (Freud), the revolutionary masses (Marx) and the rebellious students (Marcuse) are today the ultimates in authority, values and power.

Moses had to feel this volcanic upsurge from the irrational elements working in the underground of the Old Testament Qahal, or the Church. Lenin had to correct Marx's theory of revolution; the masses are inert without leaders. Three such leaders arose against Moses: Korah, Dothan and Abiron. These three rebels contacted 250 others, "leaders of the community, prominent in the solemn feasts, men of repute" (Numbers 16/1). They might have been called "learned theologians" for even then too often the adjective "learned" was identified with opposition to Moses, the leader.

The argument of these "signers" was implausible, because it depended on the great truth that we are all people of God, thus making Moses and the priest no different from anyone else. The "press" of those days gave publicity to their declaration of conscience: "You take too much on yourself. The whole community and all of its members are consecrated, and God lives among

(Continued on Page 11)

LETTERS

to the editor

Church Priorities

Editor:

The observation in Father Torney's column (Courier-Journal, 7/25/69) that "the Church might learn lessons from the success of Apollo Mission" led him later to state that the Church needs "a precise set of goals and even a deadline to put our Family of God in order."

But setting up targets and priorities for action as well as meeting a deadline for their execution requires, as the moon-program brilliantly proved, discipline from the top.

I believe that the individual American Bishop has the intelligence to see what a diocese needs. And he knows he has authority to start programs, such as preservation of the parish school system, perfection of the parochial liturgy, improvement of education on all levels, housing rehabilitation, racial relations and concern for the poor.

But unless a Bishop shows his clergy that he deeply cares about these and demands that the strongest energy and efficiency be applied to them, the clergy will not act nor will the laity receive the cue that they must help put new life in the Family of God. That's why so many causes die in committee or fail after over-publicized beginnings.

I agree that "a precise set of goals and even a deadline" would help our diocese.

— Gerald O'Hara, Elmira.

Column Disputed

Editor:

I would like to reply to Peter Goodsell's article (Courier-Journal, 7/11/69) on "Time to Secularize Catholic Colleges". It seems to me that this article is totally erroneous, topsy-turvy, and confused.

The writer says, for example, that parochial education is an "anachronism" which has "angers for students who are adapting to secular society". That is like saying that curative medicine is dangerous because it inhibits people from adapting to disease. The truth is quite the opposite: it is secular society which should be "adapted" (i.e., Christianized), and this demands more and stronger Catholic schools.

Our present secular society encompasses some pervasive evils: it is bitterly murderous (abortion); it is animalistic (birth control); it is insane (racism, the wasting of billions of dollars on space nonsense when people are dying of hunger and sickness; the fostering of militarism and nationalism which could destroy the world); and it is greed-centered.

Does Mr. Goodsell want to adapt to this? A Christian's task is to fight evil, not to swing along with it. This requires strong and solid Catholic educational institutions.

Mr. Goodsell says that Catholic teaching impresses notions of "subservience" and moral strictures against which students later rebel. In religion (as in any other scholastic subject) it is not subservience to learn what is true. If students rebel against the moral standards taught them, this means that the moral standards should be taught more compellingly and that wholesome local environments should be developed for the students' expressiveness; it does not mean that moral instruction should be diminished.

Word for Sunday

Ephpheta- Be Thou Opened

By Father James Russell

In the ancient baptismal rite, there is a ceremony known as the opening of the ears. The priest, in imitation of what Jesus did in curing a deaf man, (Mark 7), touches the ears of the catechumens, saying, "Ephpheta, be thou opened."

This ceremony is still used during the present baptismal rite. Maybe we, who have been baptized and raised in the Church, should pause and reflect on its significance.

This little rite is part of the so-called "exorcisms" of baptism. An exorcism happens when the Church commands Satan, or the Devil, or whatever mex in our time call the principle of evil and inhumanity in us, to depart from the Christian. Evil here does not mean committing sins, but rather man's inherent evil, a tendency which all of us, in moments of honesty, recognize as yet exercising its influence in us and over us.

In this particular exorcism, the Church prays that we will open our ears and vanquish our (literally) damnable tendency to close off ourselves from God in one another. This was the sin of the Pharisees, who had ears to hear but did not listen.

The very Word of God spoke to them in all of His sinless humanity, and they never heard Him. In fact, they had to eliminate Him. The good news He preached was bad news to their deaf ears.

How could this be? They were the exemplary religious people of their day. They knew all the rules and regulations of their spiritual life; they were reared from childhood in their faith; they kept all the customs with the strictest observance. And they were sure of themselves and their ways.

Jesus' words and style of life attacked all that the Pharisees held important. His words of salvation threatened their sure attitudes. He was calling these religious men to

More penetrating and relevant moral teaching is needed not only so that students have the character formation to hold fast to true morality but also that, through this youthful goodness, society can be Christianized. More and better Catholic schools are needed, to act as a haven for adapting secular society to Christ.

Mr. Goodsell continually confuses the financial problems of Catholic schools with other considerations. It is ironic that he looks in precisely the wrong direction at a time when breakthroughs are being made, here and there, in the public financing of Catholic schools. He says that we cannot afford Catholic schools, so what is to be done? The correct approach should be that since such schools are necessary, we should work to get rid of the injustice of not receiving state support.

—Robert Knife, Lynwood Drive, Rochester.

On Giving Eucharist

Editor:

By no means is this meant to be the last word on the subject nor a definitive statement but merely some thoughts on the Courier-Journal article (July 25, 1969) "Can Laymen Distribute Communion?" by Carmen Vigliucci.

The problem is not "can" but "should" laymen distribute Communion. Certainly laymen could do this but should they?

I do not think we can view the distribution of Communion as an iso-

lated event. I suggest that distributing Communion is very much tied up with the whole life of the distributor. The one who serves Communion is the same as the one who has consecrated his life in service to the Church.

The one who presents the Body of Christ to our mouths is the same as the one who presents the Word of Christ to our minds by his preaching.

To be a custodian of the Blessed Sacrament is a right and proper function of Holy Orders. The bishop gives a share of his ministry when he empowers a man for service to the Bread of Life or for other services and thereby constitutes the order of deacon.

I disagree that if lay deacons were increased they would have nothing to do but distribute Communion. Their help in preaching, baptizing, conducting Communion service in the pastor's absence, pre-marriage counseling and numerous other diacnal tasks should keep anyone busy in a one-priest parish.

Many laymen, in fact, already perform some diacnal functions in parish administration. They should also have the liturgical functions through ordination to the diaconate.

Someone who represents the official ministry should always administer the Eucharist even if it were given in the hand.

Deacon Frederick Helfrich, Spencerport.

(The Rev. Mr. Helfrich is a St. Bernard's Seminary student, serving at St. Monica's parish this summer.)



"THAT'S VERY NICE, MRS. DUGAN, BUT I'M AFRAID SOMEONE GAVE YOU A BUM STEER—I WAS AWAY AT A SEMINAR."



convert, to open their ears to the life He announced, not one that promised security in keeping laws but one which commanded openness to others' needs.

Now we all suffer the continuing effects of sin in our lives. Is it not possible that we, who have been raised in our religion as the Pharisees were in theirs, could be suffering from the same type of smugness of the Pharisees?

Could it be possible that Jesus, who we believe really lives in our day, is telling us to change, to open up, to convert? And his words could be just as threatening to our way of life as they were to the Pharisees.

Jesus' words of comfort were addressed to those who were suffering persecution and oppression, not to those who did the oppressing or did not try to alleviate the sufferings of the oppressed. He comforted the troubled. He troubled the comfortable.

Let us look into ourselves. What disturbs us? Is the living Christ confronting our way of life, which per-

mits us to be deaf to the criticisms of the radical youths, the militant black, the melodramatic pacifist?

Could it be that at least, sometimes, they are confronting a way of life which has left us deaf to the evils of our day? The materialism of our society, the invisible but real racism of ourselves and our institutions, the immorality of modern day warfare and defense, the abject poverty of most of the world?

We will object by objectifying the problem. We will not hear what they are saying because it will demand change in our lives; rather we will object to the way they say it, condemn the speck in their eyes and miss the timber in ours.

Let us use our ears to listen and not simply hear. Let us expect to be disturbed by the encounter with the honest Christ who is calling us to conversion. Let disturbing words not fall on deaf ears. "Be thou opened!"

Let our response be the response of Samuel: "Speak Lord (no matter how harsh the truth may be), your servant is listening."

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