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Pope Decries 'Irregular' Reform Ideas

Castel Gandolfo — (RNS) — The "permitted limit" may have been passed in efforts by some Church reformers, particularly in attempts to modernize the priesthood, Pope Paul VI said at his weekly general audience here.

In one of his most vigorous and direct attacks so far on the unofficial groups which have been pressing for reforms, the Pope said that the Church "needs to be internally united, in agreement, disciplined and happy."

He criticized "irregular experiments" and "too much pressure of public opinion" in the Church. The question of clerical celibacy, he said, "has been discussed too freely."

While he praised official reforms of liturgy, Canon Law and other changes being implemented or studied, the Pope said that some of the "impulses" arising from the Second Vatican Council may be harmful to the Church.

"The Council has given the Church new and numerous impulses," he said. "Not all of them have been in the right direction — that is, toward the edification of the Church of God. Thus it is that some symptoms seem to indicate serious ailments in the Church itself."

"We have pointed out some of them ourselves, such as a certain flexibility of doctrinal orthodoxy in some schools and among some scholars."

"And there is nobody who cannot see how dangerous to the religion is the habit of considering only its human and social aspect to the detriment of its principal, sacred and divine aspect — that of faith and prayer."

"In the same way, one cannot observe without apprehension the ease with which people violate the virtue of ecclesiastical obedience, which principle is part of Christ's plan for the stability and development of His mystical and visible body which is the Church."

"Perhaps," the Pope said, "the permitted limit has been exceeded in the attempt — in itself praiseworthy — to integrate the priest in his social surroundings by completely secularizing his dress, his way of thinking and living, pushing him on the path of worldly competition and thereby weakening his vocation and his function as minister of the Gospel and of grace."

"Time is needed in order to extract what is good from these expressions of Catholic life and to reabsorb them into harmony. There are those who speak of a deterioration of this life. We are not of this opinion and we confirm our faith in the hope of Christ and of the good peoples."

Irrigation Too Much, Holy Water or No

London — (RNS) — The Pentecostal church in the small village of Mow Cop (considered by its members the birthplace of primitive Methodism) has been ordered to leave a wooden hut where it has held services for four years.

Neighbors complained of loud hymn-singing during the services. But the worst problem, according to villagers, was the overflow of water whenever a new member was baptized by total immersion.

"When there is a baptism," said one neighbor, "gallons of water flood into the back gardens of the nearby houses."

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Front Page Editorial

A child crawls through a burned-out vehicle serving as a barricade between Protestants and Roman Catholics on Lord Street in Belfast, Northern Ireland. A religious billboard in background is an ironic commentary on the country's troubles. (Religious News Service)

Due Process in Church Supported by Bp. Casey

Paterson, N.J. — (NC) — The growing demand for practical procedures of due process in the Church, far from signaling a rebellion against authority, stands as a "wholesome sign of brotherly concern for justice and charity in our mutual relationships within the Church," Bishop Lawrence B. Casey of Paterson said here this week.

"Nothing makes a leader wiser in judgment or more prudent in action than the prospect of legitimate criticism to which he must listen," the bishop wrote in *The Beacon*, Paterson diocesan newspaper.

"When power is exercised without provisions for checks and balances, there is the danger that a habit of domination and a spirit of intolerance will develop."

Bishop Casey announced the convocation of a diocesan synod in the near future.

The modern bishop, Bishop Casey said, must rely on the cooperation of those whom he serves in order to accomplish anything. While his authority remains in force, he continued, it should be based on convictions reached through dialogue instead of through arbitrary decisions.

Bishop Casey praised the contributions made in the Paterson diocese by the Priests' Senate, the Sisters' Council, the Diocesan Lay Council and the Urban Task Force. They do not "threaten episcopal authority," the bishop said. "I've found during the past two years that their only concern is to help the bishop make the Church a greater force for good in the three counties of our diocese."

Bishop Casey contrasted the tenor of the Vatican Council with humanistic aspects of today's socio-philosophical revolution, noting that while the

council emphasized the dignity of man, it was always in his relationship with God.

"Along with its emphasis on the dignity of the human person," he continued, "Vatican II, the most pastoral of all the general councils, also accentuated service, a service that would reach out to all men. Its concern was with persons rather than with institutions."

The effect of that philosophy reaches each bishop, Bishop Casey said. "A bishop must be eminently concerned about everything that involves human beings. He must have a special concern for those who are struggling to pull themselves out of the depths of poverty and despair in which they have been kept by injustice and bigotry."

"To be a bishop means to bring Christ into contact with the people he serves and to encounter Christ in them."

The bishop said he had initiated preparatory work for a diocesan synod as part of a policy of examining new approaches toward current problems.

"Our common aim," he said, "is to form a kind of community where, in the people of the diocese will realize their full measure of freedom and dignity as sons of God."

Bishop Defregger Curtails Functions

Munich, Germany — (NC) — The German bishop who is accused of being a war criminal has stopped fulfilling his functions as a bishop.

A spokesman for the office of Julius Cardinal Döpfner of Munich said that Auxiliary Bishop Matthias Defregger will not administer Con-

Bishops Back Sex Protest

Baltimore — (NC) — The Catholic bishops of Maryland have issued a statement which emphasizes that parents' primary responsibility in sex education gives them the right "to remove their children from these classes" if the classes "violate their moral and religious convictions" and if all other methods of protest fail.

The statement was issued jointly by Cardinal Shehan, Patrick Cardinal O'Boyle of Washington and Bishop Thomas Mardaga of Wilmington, who comprise the Maryland Catholic Conference.

The bishops listed three responsibilities for Catholic parents:

- Discuss sexual matters with their children and determine the nature of sexual education their children receive in public schools.

- Complement the public school program by the "inculcation" of the moral aspects of human sexuality and religious virtues.

- Protest if programs violate their moral and religious convictions by the "encouragement or condonation of behavior which parents consider immoral," and to remove their children from classes if their protests are unsuccessful.

firmation, ordain, make archdiocesan visits or carry out other functions of a bishop until criminal proceedings against him are completed.

The spokesman said that until then Bishop Defregger will handle only paperwork and other administrative tasks of the Munich archdiocese.

Bishop Sheen:

Celibacy Failure Due to Faith Loss

The loss of a priest's faith rather than sexuality is the cause of most of the clergy defections of our times, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen declared this week. His first public statement on the current wide discussion of priestly celibacy was contained in an editorial beginning a series to be printed in this newspaper for the next few weeks.

(The full text of the Bishop's statement is on page 6.)

Without alluding to several recent publicized marriages of priests Bishop Sheen frankly addressed "the question often asked about a priest or religious who lapses: 'What happened?'"

"Before the tacit or overt break with vows, something cracks. It is not just morals. However much it may be denied, the breaking of vows is always preceded by a decline of faith, by less time on knees, by a looking away from the Cross and by a repudiation of the faith of the Apostles and martyrs of the Church."

Beginning with the admission that "celibacy is impossible" if it is thought of in terms of the present sensual mood of the world or the "instinctual drives of the clerical id," the Bishop said: "Faith makes celibacy a crucifix with life-conquering death, but the loss of faith makes celibacy a cross and a contradiction."

"What is faith," he continued, "but making the impossible possible and the non-natural super-natural? Faith is finding the incomprehensible totally acceptable and discovering in the boundless abyss a solid foundation."

The Bishop explained that the New Testament reveals Christ asked for two impossibles: the first was to get men to give up riches for the king-

dom of God; the second "to induce them to surrender sex for the kingdom of God."

"The impossible will always be hard," the Bishop stated, "but is possible among those who are not of the world and who would save their lives by losing it. The impossibility of a life-a-ey intensifies as faith weakens."

"Faith in God makes the impossible possible. And faith means that He who gives a cross will give the strength to bear it."

Asking the question whether the defections on celibacy are related to affluence and "secularism" or to prevalent moods of protest and criticism, the Bishop said strongly:

"One thing is certain: it has something to do with our loss of faith, our unworn prejudices, the infrequency of visits to the Blessed Sacrament, our growing skepticism, our rosary-less pockets, our night meetings of rebellion, our dread of appearing as priests among the worldly and our unopened Scriptures."

St. Peter could do the impossible of walking on water for a little while, the Bishop wrote, as long as he was going toward Christ. But when he took his eyes off Jesus "and began to take account of the storm and felt the force of the wind," as St. Matthew reported the incident, he began to sink.

"Has there ever been a sacerdotal drowning in the Sea of Sexuality," the Bishop asked, "without first a turning from Jesus and a turning to the terrible impact of the Gallup polls, statistics and the hot sermons of hebdomadal theologians which proclaim that celibacy is unnatural and impossible?"

Bishop Honors Priests Killed in Auto Collision

Elmira — Two Southern Tier priests killed in an auto collision last Sunday night were lauded here Wednesday by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen as loyal examples of their commitment to Christ, to the Church and to their vocations.

The Bishop was principal celebrant of an afternoon Mass in SS. Peter & Paul Church for repose of the souls of Father Joseph G. Merkel and Father David N. Mattie.

Bishop Sheen speculated that the priests' violent deaths were divinely willed acts of "atonement and reparation."

Stating that nothing is totally an accident in this life, he asked: "Is it part of Divine Providence that the remains of these good priests are the coinage we have to pay for the return of holiness to our diocesan priesthood?"

"Why so many violent deaths of good priests and Sisters of this diocese in recent weeks? Perhaps because never in 100 years of the diocese has the Heart of Christ been pierced so sorely by defections."

"These priests went to death on the eve of Yom Kippur, the holy day of atonement, and they are to be buried the day after the feast of Our Lady of Ransom. I see them as a ransom for our diocese."

Citing the 18th chapter of the Prophecy of Jeremiah, the Bishop spoke of the deceased as "vessels broken on the potter's wheel."

"But the Potter will start afresh and the word will come to us as it did to the prophet: 'As clay is in the hand of the potter, so are you in My hand, oh Diocese of Rochester.'"

In conclusion the Bishop prayed: "May we priests and Sisters be branded with the blood of Father Mattie and Father Merkel to save us so that no vengeance be visited on us for failing the Lord. Pray we be holy men and women like those we are consigning to the grave."

Funeral Masses for the two priests were held at 11 a.m. Thursday. Auxiliary Bishop John E. McCafferty was principal celebrant at the Mass for Father Merkel in St. Charles Borromeo Church, Elmira Heights, and Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey at the Mass for Father Mattie in St. Ann's Church, Hornell, his home city.

Father Merkel, 62, had been pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Church for 15 years, and Father Mattie, 36, had been an assistant at SS. Peter & Paul Church for seven years.

They were killed at about 10:30 p.m. Sept. 21, 1969, in the collision of their car and a tractor-trailer on Route 17 about four miles west of Owego. They were returning home after attending Forty Hours Devotions at St. Patrick's Church in Owego.

(Continued on Page 2)



FATHER MERKEL



FATHER MATTIE

Reparations Backed By Bishop Perry

St. Louis, Mo. — (RNS) — The United States' only black Roman Catholic prelate has endorsed the payment of "reparations" by American churches and synagogues to Negroes.

Auxiliary Bishop Harold R. Perry of New Orleans, in an address to the annual meeting of the Major Superiors of Religious Women here, called for "payments of reparations as penance" "for the complicity of the white churches and synagogues in America's exploitation of the black man."

"We must recognize that the practices of the church in the past of associating the preaching of the Gospel with oppressive colonizing efforts of European and American nations were and are un-Christian," Bishop Perry said.

Bishop Perry asserted that colonialism has apparently made the acceptance of Western culture a pre-condition for church membership and advancement in the church.